

THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, February 4, 1901, by Frank Tousey.

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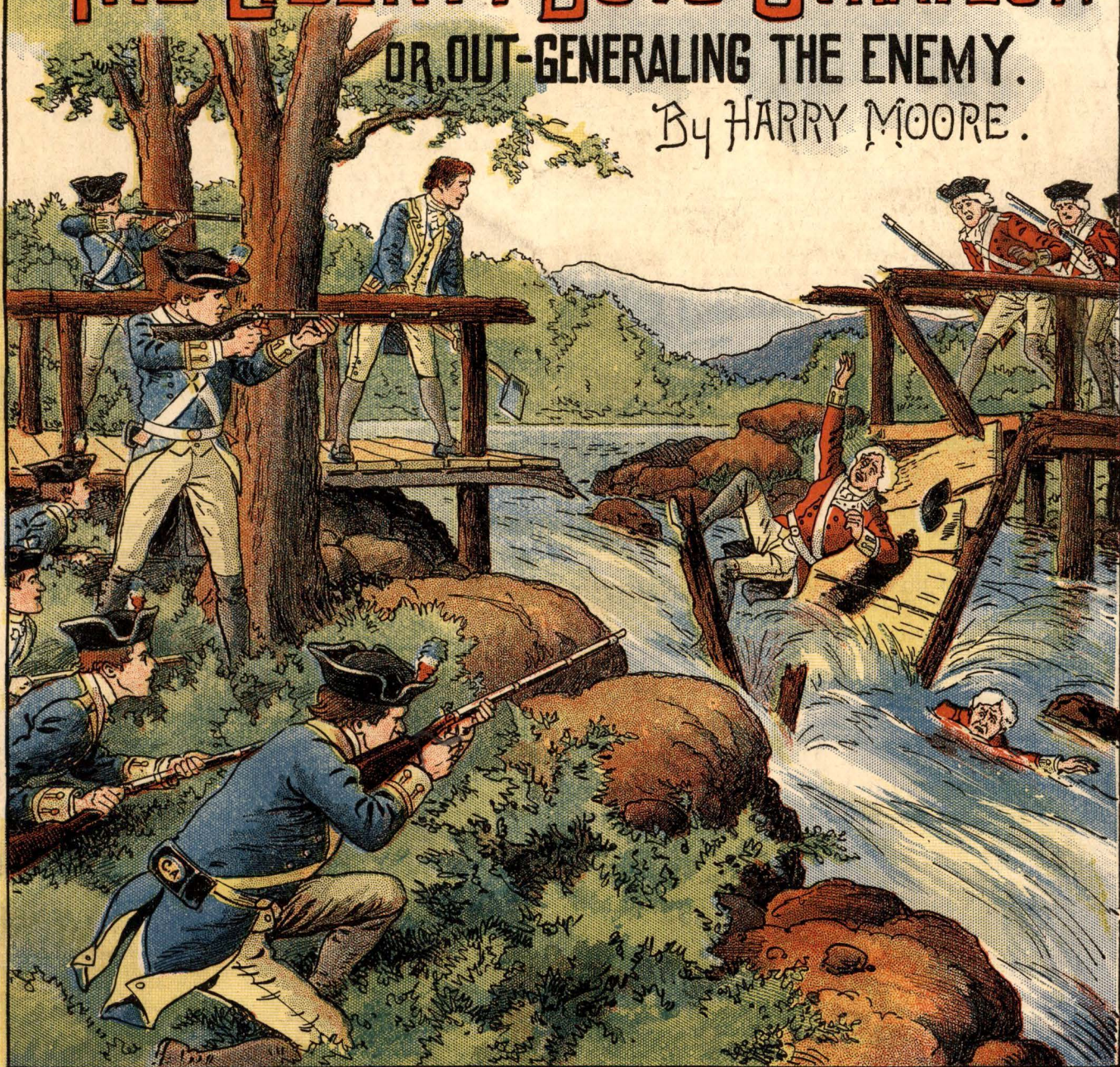
NEW YORK, JANUARY 17, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS' STRATEGY:

OR, OUT-GENERALING THE ENEMY.

By HARRY MOORE.



As the redcoat leader reached the middle of the bridge, Dick cut the stringer with a blow from the ax, and down into the water went bridge, officer and some of his men.

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CHAPTER I.

AT THE DANCE.

"Hello, they seem to be having a good time in there!"

A horseman sat his steed in front of a farmhouse, down in old Virginia.

It was about ten o'clock of a pleasant night in early spring.

The farmhouse in question was lighted up in grand style, and the sound of music and dancing, of joyous voices and silvery laughter came from within.

The horseman could not withstand the temptation.

"Jove! I guess I shall have to go in and take a hand in that," he murmured.

Then he leaped to the ground, tied his horse and walked quickly to the house. He knocked, and the door was opened by a colored man.

"Come in, sah; come in," said the negro, bowing and showing his teeth in a broad smile; "de young folkses is habbin' a fine time, sah, an' yo' hain't enny too airy, ef yo' wants ter put in a full night ob hit, sah."

The stranger grasped the situation and was quick to take advantage of it. The servant supposed him to be some young man of the neighborhood, and he would be enabled to enter the house and join the dancers without trouble. The adventure was quite to his liking, and the young man—for he was a handsome young fellow of not more than twenty-one—said:

"Show me to the cloak-room."

"Dis way, sah."

The young man followed the negro to a room, where he laid aside his overcoat and then he made his way to the large room where the dancing was going on.

He found about thirty men and maidens in the room, and two sets were dancing a quadrille. That they were having a good time was evident. Their happy faces showed that, and there was such freedom from restraint that the atmosphere was delightful.

All were talking and laughing, and jollity reigned supreme.

The stranger's entrance into the room was noted, how-

ever, and those who were not dancing eyed the young man in wondering surprise. Who was he? The young beaux decided that the intrusion of a stranger should be resented, and would have moved forward and addressed him at once, but were restrained by the girls, who had been impressed by the handsome face and manly bearing of the newcomer.

"Oh, for goodness sake, don't go and interfere with him!" said one jolly, black-eyed maiden. "Handsome young men are scarce enough here, and it would be a sin to cause this one to take his departure. Indeed, we are not going to permit him to be driven away, are we, girls?"

"No, no, no!" was the cry, and the merry maidens looked at the handsome young stranger, admiringly, out of the corners of their eyes.

The young beaux frowned and looked gloweringly at the youth who had caused this trouble. Doubtless they wished the stranger in Jericho, or some other far-away place. One of their number, however, did not seem so put out. He was a handsome young fellow of about twenty years, and he chuckled the black-eyed beauty under the chin and said:

"One would think, Molly, that you did not have a very good opinion of we fellows as specimens of manly beauty. How could you be so cruel as to insinuate such a thing? I feel hurt—crippled—mortally wounded, I do believe!"

"Oh, well, it is only your vanity that is hurt, Sam!" laughed Molly Marsden, "so I guess it will do you good, instead of harm. Please go over and make the young man's acquaintance and then bring him and introduce him to us, that's a good boy!" and Molly patted Sam Bostwick on the head as if he were her little brother.

"Will you promise not to fall in love with him, Molly?" asked Sam, with exaggerated seriousness.

The girl tossed her head and gave Sam a coquettish look.

"I will promise nothing, Sam Bostwick," she said; "I don't have to, for if you don't bring him here and introduce him, I shall go and make his acquaintance myself, so there!"

"I see all my fond hopes going glimmering!" sighed Sam, pretending to wipe a tear from the corner of his

eye. "Girls, which one of you will love me when the stranger has robbed me of Molly?"

Smack! Molly's chubby hand struck the youth a smart blow on the cheek.

"Stop your fooling, Sam Bostwick!" the girl cried, "and do what I told you to do."

Sam sighed.

"Well, here goes," he said; "I guess I shall have to do it, but it is hard, awfully hard!"

He walked across to where the young stranger stood, and, bowing, said, in a voice loud enough for the group he had just left to hear:

"Good evening. Those young ladies, yonder, are dying to know you, and sent me over to bring you and introduce you. Just tell me your name and come along with me and I'll make you acquainted with some of the sweetest girls in Old Virginia."

"Sam!" almost shrieked Molly, shaking her fist at the youth's back. "Oh, I'll just about kill you the first time I get you to myself!"

"I'll see that you don't get me that way," was the response; "henceforth I shall travel surrounded by a body-guard."

There was such a humorous expression on the face of Sam as he addressed the young stranger that the latter could not help smiling. He could see that the irrepressible young Virginian was an original character, and fell into the spirit of the affair, offhand.

"The young ladies do me too much honor," he said, smiling; "it is unnecessary to say that I shall be only too glad to make their acquaintance."

"Your name, Sir Knight?" remarked Sam, with a grandiloquent air.

"Richard Slater."

"Aha! Sir Richard, come with me!"

Sam seized the arm of Dick Slater and led him across toward the little group, but paused when a few feet distant, and pointing to Molly Marsden, said, in an exaggerated whisper, easily heard by all:

"That young lady is my sweetheart! Isn't she sweet? I think she is just lovely, but the trouble is that she knows it, and takes advantage of it and makes me her slave. I tell you this in confidence so that if she makes a dead set at you you will be on your guard and be enabled to escape my fate."

"Sam Bostwick!" cried Molly, shaking her head at him in a threatening manner, yet with a repressed smile in her dark eyes—for she was used to the youth's ways and thought a great deal of him—"I'll settle with you when I get a chance!"

Sam was evidently not much frightened, for he laughed and then introduced Dick to the different members of the group:

The girls chatted with the young stranger as if they had known him all their lives, and he was as jolly as could be. The other young men gradually became more at ease and accepted Dick as one of them, and the talk and laughter was unconfined. Sam was the liveliest one of all, and his droll sayings kept the others in a continual roar.

When the quadrille ended those who had been dancing hastened forward and were introduced to Dick Slater. Sam took everything into his own hands and explained—without knowing anything at all about it—that the young man was from the North, and was on his way to visit relatives living near Richmond. That satisfied all, and the stranger was accepted at par and was soon as much one of them, seemingly, as though he had lived in the neighborhood all his life.

"Partners for a waltz!" called out the floor manager, and Sam Bostwick caught Dick by the arm and led him to Molly Marsden.

"Here he is, Molly!" the youth said. "Molly made me promise to have you ask her to waltz with you," he ostentatiously explained to Dick; "so please ask her, if you are my friend, and wish to save my life."

Dick laughed, and then, bowing low, asked the pleasure of a waltz with the vivacious beauty.

Molly graciously granted the favor and a moment later they were whirling over the floor in an exceedingly graceful fashion, for both were splendid waltzers.

"My cake's all dough!" remarked Sam, with a serio-comic air, after watching the two for a few moments; "Molly just loves to waltz, and that fellow can beat me all to pieces. I might as well go and blow my brains out and be done with it!"

"You can't do that, Sam; you haven't any brains!" said Molly, who was whirling past as the youth spoke and heard him, as he intended she should.

"Never mind, Sam," said Lucy Whitcomb, a lively, fair-faced girl; "there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out."

"True, Lucy," cried Sam, brightening up; "come to think of it, you are a most charming girl, yourself. Come waltz with me and I will show that fair, hard-hearted one that I am not to be trifled with!"

"All right, Sam," laughed Lucy; "a handsome young fellow like you ought not to have much trouble in finding some one to console him."

"Thanks, Lucy. If Joe Harper wasn't looking, I would kiss you for that!"

The girl laughed merrily.

"Don't let that hinder you," she said. "Joe isn't jealous; and then, he hasn't any right to object to any one kissing me."

She looked up into Sam's face with such a roguish expression that the youth could not help himself, and quick as a flash he gave her a smack. Molly happened to be looking at the time and she cried out:

"You think you're awfully smart, don't you, Sam Bostwick? Well, I'll show you that that is a game that two can play!" and quick as a flash she kissed Dick.

The young man laughed.

"Thanks!" he said. "I certainly cannot complain of my treatment here to-night. I'm awfully glad I stopped."

The youths and girls who were not dancing, all of whom saw what was going on, laughed and teased and joked Joe Harper at a great rate.

"Lucy has gone back on you, Joe!" was the cry, but he did not seem to be at all alarmed.

"That is all right," he said; "I know what Lucy is up to. She is full of the Old Nick, and she did that to tease Molly."

The waltz had just come to an end when all present were startled by the sudden appearance of eight British soldiers who had pushed their way into the room without ceremony.

"Hello, here!" cried the leader of the redcoats, a dark-faced fellow, wearing a lieutenant's uniform. "You are having a fine time, aren't you? Well, we will take a hand. Boys, select your partners for a quadrille!"

CHAPTER II.

PUTTING THE REDCOATS TO FLIGHT.

The girls uttered a chorus of screams and retreated toward a corner of the room, while the youths glared at the intruders in an angry and defiant manner.

Sam Bostwick stepped forward, and, confronting the redcoats, said:

"By what right do you intrude in this manner?"

Dick, who was watching affairs closely, was surprised to see that the light-hearted, seemingly frivolous youth had become serious and grim-looking, and that there was a glint of danger in his eyes.

"By what right, you ask?" said the lieutenant, sneer-

ingly. "Why, the right of might. Boys, select partners for a quadrille! Fiddler, strike up the music."

The redcoats started forward, with eager looks on their faces. Evidently they thought they were going to have a very enjoyable time.

But Sam Bostwick stood his ground.

"Back!" he cried. "You need not think that because you are soldiers of the king, and are armed, that you can come in here and do as you please! You had better be careful!"

"Get out of the way!" cried the British soldier, menacingly.

"I won't!" was the undaunted reply. "Boys, come here and stand by me! Let's not let these redcoats do as they please. I for one will die before I will stand by and see them force our girls to dance with them!"

"Then die, curse you!" cried the lieutenant, drawing his sword and drawing back to cut the brave young Virginian down.

There was no doubt but that the redcoat meant to kill Sam Bostwick. All who witnessed the man's action realized this, and a scream went up from the lips of the girls, while a cry of horror escaped the youths, several of whom leaped forward with the intention of trying to save their friend. They would have been too late, however, for the sword would have descended before they could have got within reach of the redcoat fiend. Sam was not to die on this night, however, and just as the sword started to descend and a shriek went up from the girls, there came the sharp crack of a pistol and the lieutenant's arm fell to his side, broken by the bullet, while a wild cry of pain and rage escaped its owner. The sword fell to the floor with a clatter.

All looked to see who had fired the shot, and saw the young stranger, Dick Slater, standing at one side of the room with a smoking pistol in his hand. He had fired the shot and saved Sam's life.

He at once took charge of affairs. He leaped forward and attacked the amazed and almost paralyzed redcoats with great fury, striking about him with the clubbed pistol to wonderful effect.

"Go for them, boys!" he cried. "Come on, and teach the cowardly scoundrels a lesson they will not forget in a hurry!"

The youths were quick to respond. They leaped forward, and although the redcoats tried to draw weapons they were not given time or opportunity. They were knocked and beaten, and handled so roughly that they could do nothing; and finally they found themselves thrown headlong out of doors.

"Now, get on your horses and get away from here just as quickly as you can!" cried Dick. "You are not wanted here, and if you try any more tricks you will not get off with a few broken heads. Go; and be in a hurry about it, too!"

The redcoats made all possible haste to get out of the yard, but paused just outside and began talking, eagerly and excitedly.

"They are planning mischief," said Dick to Sam; "they will come back and try to enter the house. As they are armed, they may be able to cause us some trouble. Quick, let's get inside and bar the door; and then, if there are any firearms in the house, some of you boys get them. We will have to fight the scoundrels."

The youths hastened within doors and closed and barred the door. Then Dick told the girls to go upstairs.

"We are going to have a fight with the redcoats," he said, "and we don't want you girls to be where you will run any chance of being hit by a bullet."

The girls were frightened, with two exceptions, and hastened to go upstairs. The exceptions were Molly Marsden and Lucy Whitcomb.

"Oh, let me stay downstairs and help you fight!" Molly implored. "I can shoot just as good as any of the boys."

"And so can I!" said Lucy Whitcomb. "Let me help you fight those insolent redcoats!"

But Dick and the other youths dissuaded them from this.

"We cannot permit it," said Dick, decidedly; "besides, we do not need any assistance. There are enough of us to whip twice as many of the redcoats as there are out there."

A rifle and a musket and three pistols, as well as an old sword and plenty of powder and bullets were found, and the youths felt that they could put the enemy to flight. Mr. Hardy, at whose house the dance was being held, was a warm patriot, and he was ready to help the youths fight.

Two or three of the youths, Dick noted, were anything but enthusiastic for the work in hand and he was shrewd enough to guess that they were inclined to Toryism.

Just then there came the noise of pounding on the front door, and a hoarse, angry voice called out:

"Open the door! Open it at once or we will break it down!"

The lights had all been extinguished in the front room so that the enemy could not see in and take aim at the defenders, but a sudden thought came to Dick and he made up his mind to carry the war into Africa, so to speak.

He communicated his plan to Sam Bostwick, and the

youth was right in for it. The plan was to slip out through a rear door and go around and attack the redcoats from both the right and the left, simultaneously.

The youths armed themselves with the weapons and then those who had no firearms secured such things as they could lay hands on, that would answer for implements of warfare. Thus equipped they left the house by the rear door, and dividing into two equal parties, rushed around the house and attacked the redcoats with great fury.

Several shots were fired, and two of the redcoats were wounded; and then the rest received such a beating as they had never had before. They were knocked down and their weapons taken away from them and then they were again hustled out of the yard, being thrown bodily over the fence.

"Now go!" cried Dick; "and don't be slow about it, either!"

The redcoats hastened to untie their horses and mount, the wounded ones—three, counting the lieutenant—not being so badly wounded as to make them incapable of climbing into the saddles. As they turned their horses to ride away the lieutenant cried out:

"We go, now, but we will return again. I understand that this is a Whig neighborhood and I will come back and bring a sufficient force with me so that we will be able to do as we please, and then you will realize that this is about the worst night's work you ever did."

"That will do," said Dick, sternly. "Don't make any threats. Go and bring a force here, if you like; we will be ready for you, and I think that you will get all you want!"

"Bah! when you see all your homes in flames you will think differently!" cried the British officer, venomously. "And as for you, you young scoundrel, I have a score to settle with you. You shot me in the arm and nothing but your heart's blood will cancel the debt!"

"I am afraid the debt will have to remain uncanceled, then, for I haven't any heart's blood to spare," replied Dick, quietly. Then he pointed down the road.

"We have heard quite enough of you!" he added, sternly. "Go! and thank your lucky stars that you are permitted to do so. I will just add that if you will take my advice you will stay away from this neighborhood."

"I will be back here with two hundred men in less than forty-eight hours!" was the fierce reply. "And when we get here, look out. We will burn down the house of every Whig in this part of the country!"

"Go!" cried Dick. "And I will just say that if you do come, you had better be prepared to look out for yourselves; you will not get off so easy as you have this time."

"Bah!" sneered the lieutenant; "that is mere boy bravado. Come, men," and whirling his horse he galloped away down the road. He had tucked his wounded arm inside the front of his overcoat, thus making an impromptu sling, and had no trouble in guiding his horse with one hand.

"Say, he must be a pretty nervy fellow, Dick," said Sam Bostwick; "that arm of his must have been giving him considerable pain, yet he sat there and talked as boldly and fiercely as if he were not wounded at all."

"He has plenty of nerve," agreed Dick, "and he is a big scoundrel, too, or I'm no judge."

The youths now hastened back into the house to let the girls know they had triumphed and put the enemy to flight.

The big front room was lighted up again and the girls had come downstairs.

As the youths entered the house they were surrounded by the girls who chattered like magpies, asking innumerable questions.

"Oh, Mr. Slater, you saved Sam's life!" cried Molly Marsden. "I'm going to give you a kiss for that!" and she threw her arms around Dick's neck and gave him a smack. Then she leaped into Sam's arms and kissed him, again and again.

"You see how it is, everybody?" said Sam, with a serio-comic air. "I'm only second choice. Oh, Dick, why did you save my life? 'Twere better I had died than that I should live to have this bitter realization thrust upon me!"

"Stop your foolishness!" cried Mollie, giving him a slap and leaping away from him.

"That was a wonderful shot of yours, Mr. Slater," said Lucy Whitecomb; "if you had missed, that dreadful man would have killed Sam, sure enough!"

"I guess you're right about that," said Sam; "he would have made me the late Mr. Bostwick in another instant if Dick's bullet hadn't struck him in the arm. I thank you for saving my life," giving Dick his hand; "and if the opportunity ever comes I will do as much for you."

"That's all right," smiled Dick; "I was only too glad to be the means of saving your life."

The young people were determined that their pleasure should not be spoiled and soon they were gliding over the floor in accompaniment to the strains from the fiddle of the old ducky who was furnishing the music.

Dick was the hero of the occasion. All the girls were wild to dance with him, and had it not been for the fact that the youth had won the esteem and good will of the young men by saving Sam Bostwick's life and leading them to victory over the redcoats, he would, no doubt, have

earned the dislike of the young fellows. As it was, however, not one of them but what was willing that his girl should dance with the young stranger.

For once in his life Dick had all the dancing that he wanted, and he certainly enjoyed himself.

About midnight supper was announced and Dick had the honor of taking Molly Marsden in to the table. Two or three tables had been placed in a row, end to end; covers were laid over these and they fairly groaned with the weight of good things upon them. It was really one long table and all the young people were enabled to have places at it at the same time.

It was a jolly crowd. The young people ate and drank and laughed and talked and enjoyed themselves immensely. Dick was given the position of honor at the head of the table, and there was much good-natured rivalry among the girls, each of whom tried to get the youth to talk to them as much as possible. Molly being his partner at the table, naturally had the advantage and she used it to the fullest extent.

As there had been just fifteen boys and fifteen girls before Dick arrived at the farmhouse, there was no one for Sam Bostwick to take out to supper. He was not a whit disconcerted, however, but took his position at the foot of the table and soon had all roaring at his comical remarks.

"I've lost my best girl, Mrs. Hardy," he said to the woman of the house, who was waiting on the table; "but if you will give me plenty to eat, I guess I'll survive."

"I'll come down there and slap your face for you, Sam Bostwick, if you don't stop your silly chatter!" cried Molly Marsden; "you're worse than any parrot I ever heard."

"And you'll be saying next that I'm greener than any parrot you ever saw, won't you?" grinned Sam.

"Well, if I were to say it, it would be the truth."

Presently a thought struck Sam and he made room at the foot of the table, placed another chair, and taking Mrs. Hardy by the arm made her take a seat beside him.

"I'm not going to get left, if I know myself," said Sam, with a droll air; "all the other fellows have a girl and I'm going to have one, too."

As Mrs. Hardy was a portly woman, weighing at least two hundred pounds, the sight of her and Sam sitting there at the foot of the table was comical, to say the least, and caused all to roar with laughter.

"You'd better not let Mr. Hardy see you," said Lucy Whitecomb, shaking her finger at Sam.

Nearly all had some joking remark to make, and the fun was fast and furious. As Mrs. Hardy was a jolly,

good-natured woman, she enjoyed the fun almost as much as the young folks and entered into the affair with zest.

"Now, where are you, Molly Marsden?" cried Sam, with a grandiloquent air. "There's no use of your trying to get ahead of Sam Bostwick!"

"Oh, that's all right!" retorted Molly, tossing her head with an independent air.

"Do you remember what I told you when we were dancing together this evening, Sam?" asked Lucy.

"What was it, Lucy?"

"Why, that there is as good fish in the sea as ever came out. You've found that to be true, haven't you?" with a nod toward Mrs. Hardy.

"Yes, indeed!" replied Sam, promptly; "just as good ones—and bigger ones, too." This caused an outburst of laughter and none laughed more than Mrs. Hardy, who could appreciate the joke even though it was at her own expense.

When supper was over the young folks returned to the large front room and while waiting for the negro musician to eat his supper, Dick took up the violin and placing it under his chin, drew the bow across the strings in a manner which betokened the fact that he was a master of the instrument.

Then he played piece after piece, while the boys and girls listened with breathless eagerness. Never in their lives had they heard such music.

Mr. and Mrs. Hardy came to the door and listened, and behind them were a dozen negro slaves who had been drawn hither by the music.

At last Dick laid the instrument down with a sigh. The old fiddle was a good one and he could have played all night.

Instantly a roar of applause went up. All clapped their hands and the girls crowded around the youth and all talked at once, congratulating him on his wonderful playing.

"Say, that was fine, Dick!" said Sam Bostwick, when he could make himself heard; "it beats anything I ever heard, and if you had kept it up a minute or two longer I almost believe I could have forgiven you for taking Molly away from me."

The negro musician showed up at this juncture and dancing was immediately resumed. It was kept up till three o'clock and then the party broke up and dispersed to their various homes, but not until each and every one had shaken hands with Dick Slater and told him how glad they were they had made his acquaintance. To some of them who inquired if he thought it possible that they might ever meet again, the youth said:

"It is quite probable that we will meet a number of times. I have about made up my mind to remain in this neighborhood a week or so."

This was pleasing news to all, and they told him that if he would do so they would see to it that another dance or two should be held.

When all had gone, Dick turned to Mr. Hardy and said:

"If you have no objections, sir, I will spend the rest of the night with you."

"I should certainly object if you were to try to go away," was the hearty reply. "You are welcome to stay, not only the rest of the night, but a week, two weeks, or as long as you care to remain. I assure you we shall consider it an honor to have you with us."

"Thank you," said Dick. "I may take advantage of your kind invitation."

Dick was shown to the spare room, and was soon sound asleep.

He was up bright and early, however, for he knew that there was work for him to do.

CHAPTER III.

DICK AND SAM AT WORK.

After breakfast next morning Dick called Mr. Hardy to one side.

"I wish to talk to you," he said.

"What about, Mr. Slater?"

"About the redcoats. You know those scoundrels who were here last night said they would be back within forty-eight hours with two hundred men, and that they would burn the home of every patriot in the neighborhood."

"I know they did, and the matter has been giving me a great deal of worry. It will not be pleasant to be burned out of house and home."

"No, indeed; but I don't think there is any necessity of it."

"How are we to help ourselves?"

"Mr. Hardy, how many patriot families are there in this neighborhood?"

The man was silent for a few moments, and then said: "Within a radius of five miles there are at least forty Whig families."

"Forty, eh?"

"Yes."

"And about how many young men are there in those forty families?"

"Oh, I should say there are one hundred and twenty-five."

"Good! Then there is not the least use of permitting the redcoats to come in here and burn the patriot families out of house and home."

"How will you prevent it?"

"By organizing a company among the young men of the neighborhood and showing fight when the redcoats come."

Mr. Hardy was surprised. Such a thought had not occurred to him.

"Why," he went on, "what could boys do? You could not cope with the trained soldiers of the king!"

"And why not?"

"Well—because you are only boys."

"That doesn't make any difference; boys can fight just as well as men. Listen here! Have you ever heard of 'The Liberty Boys of '76'?"

Mr. Hardy thought a moment. Then a look of intelligence appeared in his eyes, and he nodded his head.

"Yes, yes!" he said. "I have heard of them, and how they have done such wonderful work in the North, with General Washington's army. But, then, they are——"

"Mere boys, the same as are the youths of this neighborhood, and the boys of the South are just as brave as the youths of the North, and there is no reason why they should not make just as good fighters."

"That is undoubtedly true," acquiesced the farmer; "but they would have to have training, and where would they get it? Those 'Liberty Boys' you speak of had splendid training, and had good officers. Why, I remember, now, of hearing the most wonderful stories regarding the captain of the 'Liberty Boys.' His name was Dick Slater, and——"

Mr. Hardy suddenly stopped and stared at Dick in open-mouthed amazement. His looks were so comical the youth could not help smiling.

"W-why, y-your name is D-Dick S-Slater!" the man gasped. "It can't be possible that—that——"

"That what?" asked Dick, enjoying the man's excitement.

"That you are Dick Slater—the Dick Slater we have heard so much about, I mean?"

"I am Dick Slater, and am the captain of 'The Liberty Boys of '76,'" was the quiet reply.

Mr. Hardy was greatly excited. He wondered that he had not thought that Dick might be the young man he had heard so much about as soon as he had heard the youth's name the night before.

"But, then, I never thought of such a thing as that

you would be away down here in Virginia," he added.

"I supposed you were away up North somewhere."

"I have been sent down here by General Washington, for the purpose of assisting in holding Arnold in check," Dick explained.

"But how comes it that you are alone? Where are your 'Liberty Boys'?"

"The commander-in-chief had some work for them to do, and so I came on ahead, in order to learn the lay of the land. I am glad that I did so, as now I shall be able to help you people save your homes."

"I am glad of it, too," said Mr. Hardy, and then he rushed into the house and told his wife and daughter Mabel that their guest was Dick Slater, the captain of the company of "Liberty Boys" they had heard so much about, and that the "Liberty Boys" were on their way down into Virginia, and that Dick had come on ahead to get the lay of the ground.

"Oh, goodness! Won't the girls be tickled when they learn who the young man really was that they danced with last night!" exclaimed Mabel, her eyes sparkling. "Just to think of it! And I danced with him twice."

"And he's going to organize a company among the boys of our neighborhood, and fight the redcoats when they come to burn our homes," added Mr. Hardy.

"Oh, glory!" cried Mabel. "A company of 'Liberty Boys' right here at home! Won't that be fine! Oh, I wish I was a boy, so I could join the company! But maybe he will get up a company of girls, or let us join, anyway!"

"Oh, no, Miss Mabel!" exclaimed Dick, who had entered and heard the girl's last words. "There will be enough of the boys without you girls having to take up arms. You give us the encouragement of your good wishes, and that will be sufficient."

"Oh, if you will whip the redcoats and save the homes of the patriots, we will do more than that—we will love you, oh, so much!" the impulsive girl cried.

"Tell that to the boys and they will fight like demons!" smiled Dick.

"We girls will tell them, never fear!"

Dick knew that he would have but little time to spare, and asked Mr. Hardy if he would assist him in organizing the company by going with him and telling him where the patriot youths lived.

"I shall be only too glad to do so, Dick," was the reply.

They saddled horses, mounted, and half an hour later were on their way to the nearest Whig neighbor's home.

It happened that this was where Sam Bostwick lived. When he saw Dick he gave the youth a joyous greeting. With all his frivolous manner, Sam was a manly, good-

hearted youth, and he would never forget that the young man had saved his life.

When he learned that Dick was the Dick Slater who had become so famous in the North, both as a soldier and as a spy, he was as greatly surprised as Mr. Hardy had been, and when he learned that it was the youth's intention to organize a company from among the Whig boys of the neighborhood to fight the redcoats and protect the patriots' homes, he was wild with delight, and was right in for it.

"The boys will be crazy to join!" he declared; "you will have no difficulty in getting enough for a company."

Dick knew that there was good stuff in Sam, and told him that he should be the second in command, and that they would together organize the company.

This pleased Sam greatly, though he said that there were others of the boys who would make a better officer than he. This Dick did not believe, however, and said so, and it was decided that Sam should be second in command. With such a youth for a right-hand man, Dick felt that there would be no trouble in getting things in good working shape very quickly.

Dick told Mr. Hardy that he might return home, as with Sam to aid him he would not need any other assistance. The farmer was glad to do this, as there was work he wished to do; so, wishing the youths success, he rode back to his home.

Dick and Sam set out at once. Sam made no move toward stopping at the first house they came to, although a young man was to be seen out in the barnyard watering some stock.

Dick mentioned this, and his companion explained by uttering the one word, "Tories."

"Ah! That's it, eh?" remarked Dick. "Wasn't that fellow at the dance last night?"

"Yes; and didn't you notice that he wasn't very enthusiastic when you said we would fight the redcoats?"

"Yes, I noticed that, and there were two more in the same fix, unless I am badly fooled."

"Yes; there were three Tory boys there. This one here is Joe Hooker; the other two live five or six miles away."

They were almost opposite the youth in the barnyard now, and he nodded to the two, and called out, "Good morning," though in not a very pleasant way, they thought.

"Hello, Joe!" called out Sam. Then he winked at Dick, and said in a low voice: "Let's ask him to join us, and see what he says."

Dick nodded. "All right," he said. "You do the talking."

They brought their horses to a stop, and Sam called to Joe to come over to the fence. The youth obeyed.

"What do you want?" he asked, leaning over the fence and eyeing the two in a not too friendly fashion.

"We want you to join us, Joe."

"To join you?" Joe evidently did not know what to think.

"Yes; to join the company which we are going to organize to fight the redcoats with."

Joe turned pale. "You are going to organize a company to fight the British?" he almost gasped.

"Yes. Of course you'll join! All the boys will be glad to do so. This is Dick Slater, who was at the dance last night, you know. Well, he is the fellow we have heard so much about—the captain of 'The Liberty Boys of '76', you know—and he is going to be the captain of our company, and drill us and teach us how to fight."

"You boys can't expect to stand before the trained soldiers of the king," said Joe, with a sulky air. "They will kill every one of you."

"You think so?"

"Yes; you had better give up the idea of fighting them."

"Do you mean by that that you will not join us?"

"I certainly shall not join you! I have no desire to die a sudden and violent death."

Sam's eyes flashed.

"You are either a Tory, and sympathize with the king, or you are a big coward, Joe Hooker!" he cried hotly.

Joe's face flushed. "I'm no coward, Sam Bostwick!" he replied; "and if I don't see fit to join this company, which you say you are going to organize, I don't know that it is anybody's business."

"It ought to be your business to wish to fight to save the homes of your neighbors from being burned down, Joe Hooker; but I suppose you think that because your folks are Tories your house will escape the general ruin, and you don't care what becomes of the rest."

"I don't have to stand here and listen to your talk," said Joe, with a sullen look on his face, and he turned and went back to his work of watering the stock.

The two rode onward. A quarter of a mile further they came to the home of Molly Marsden.

The girl happened to step out of doors just as the two, having dismounted and tied their horses, were approaching the house, and she gave a cry of delight and advanced to meet them.

"I am so glad to see you again, Mr. Slater!" she exclaimed, giving Dick her hand.

"And I am very glad, indeed, to see you again, Miss

Marsden," said Dick, shaking hands with the beautiful girl.

Sam held out his hand. "Aren't you going to shake hands with me, Molly?" he asked.

She placed her hands behind her and shook her head.

"Not yet," she declared; "you acted just too awfully mean last night for me to forgive you so soon. I am not going to be friends with you for a whole week!"

"Not even if I am going to go to war and run the risk of being killed, Molly?"

There was a serious, half-beseeching tone to the youth's voice which was not lost upon the girl, for she looked at him quickly and inquiringly and said:

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that we are going to organize a company from among the boys of the neighborhood and fight the redcoats when they come here to burn our homes, Molly."

The girl opened wide her bright eyes.

"Are you, really?" she cried, eagerly.

"Really and truly."

"Then I'll do more than shake hands with you, Sam; I'll do—this!" and she leaped into his arms and kissed him, again and again.

"I feel as if I could whip a regiment of soldiers all by myself!" said Sam, with a grin, when Molly had released him. "I'm glad I am going to be one of the members of the company, Dick!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE BOY DEFENDERS.

The news that the young man who had stopped in at the dance at Mr. Hardy's, and who shot the redcoat lieutenant and saved Sam Bostwick's life was the great Dick Slater, the famous scout and spy, of whom all had heard, and that he was going to get up a company from among the youths of the neighborhood to fight the redcoats when they came to burn the homes of the patriots, spread with wonderful quickness. Soon everybody in the settlement knew it, and there was great excitement. All had been worried when their young folks told them what the redcoat lieutenant had said he would do, and had been at a loss what to do. Some had thought of taking such of their world's goods as they could and fleeing before the British came, but now that they knew there was a chance that they might save their homes, they decided to remain and take chances.

Of course, there was a diversity of opinion. Some were sanguine that the youths would be able to fight the British soldiers off, while others shook their heads and expressed grave doubts regarding this.

"They are only boys," was the remark of these, "and cannot hope to successfully cope with the trained soldiers of King George. It will simply result in all of them losing their lives, and our homes will be burned just the same."

Others said: "The young man who is at the head of this is Dick Slater, the famous captain of the 'Liberty Boys,' of whom we have heard so much, and what he doesn't know about fighting isn't worth knowing. His company, that has done such wonderful fighting, is made up of boys, and they are no more brave, naturally, than are our boys. Dick will teach them how to fight, and when those redcoats come they will meet with a reception such as they are not dreaming of."

There was great excitement. The youths were only too glad to join the company. They were eager for the chance to get a blow in for the great cause.

By noon Dick and Sam had recruited more than a hundred youths, and in compliance with orders, they met in a large, open field, back of Mr. Hardy's, at one o'clock, for the purpose of doing some drill work. Each and every youth had a rifle or musket and a pair of pistols, as well as plenty of ammunition; and many had knives, while a few sported swords. Sam was one who had unearthed a sword which had been used by his father in the French and Indian war, and he gave this to Dick.

A great crowd had gathered to see the drilling, and to cheer the young soldiers with their presence.

Dick lost no time, as there was none to spare. The redcoats would reach the neighborhood some time next day, and they must be ready to meet the enemy. He set the boys at work at once and it was soon seen by the spectators, some of whom were old soldiers who had seen service in other campaigns, that Dick Slater knew his business. He put the boys through the manœuvres with a speed and energy that aroused all to enthusiasm, and the people cheered themselves hoarse applauding the work of the boy defenders.

They worked rapidly and steadily for a couple of hours, and then paused to rest a few minutes. Of course, the girls crowded around the youths and there was fun and jollity galore.

"Oh, just whip those redcoats, Sam Bostwick, and I will love you always!" cried Molly Marsden.

"I pity the redcoats!" said Sam, with a fierce air. "Jove! if a lot of you girls were to talk that way to a

lot of the boys, we could whip a regiment of the British and not more than half try, either."

"Then I'll see to it that they do talk that way to a lot of the boys!" cried Molly, and she began circulating among the girls and talking to them. There was much laughter, and sidewise glancing at the youths, and after a while the girls began singling out the youths and soon every girl had button-holed a boy. In almost every case the pair had been "keeping company" for a year or so, and when, after a brief conversation, the youths were seen to take the girls in their arms and kiss them, the action was understood by all: A hundred betrothals had been "signed and sealed." A great cheer went up from the spectators. The majority were parents of the boys and girls, and were pleased to know that the formation of the company of young soldiers was to be responsible for many weddings in the not far distant future.

Dick, of course, was only a spectator of this, for he had a sweetheart of his own in far-away New York, but he was young and his eyes shone with pleasure and sympathy as he gazed upon the scene.

Presently the girls released themselves from the arms of their sweethearts, and, headed by Molly Marsden, marched in a body to where Dick stood.

"Mr. Slater," said Molly, as Dick doffed his hat and stood uncovered before them, "we have come to tell you that if you lead our boys to victory and whip and drive the redcoats away, we girls will each and every one of us give you a hug and a kiss, and keep a warm spot in our hearts for you always."

"Thanks, Miss Molly," said Dick, bowing; "I shall do my utmost to earn those hugs and kisses, and if earned, will accept them in the same spirit in which they are tendered, and I know that when I return to my home in New York and tell my sweetheart about it, she will love you girls for being kind to me."

"Oh-h-h-h-h!" shrieked the girls, with eager eyes; "you have a sweetheart! How nice—how glad we are!" and they clapped their hands gleefully and fairly danced.

"Yes, and how glad we are, too!" said Sam, with a droll air; "for now we boys can breathe more freely, knowing that there isn't so much danger that Dick will take one of the girls away from one of our fellows!"

"Oh, you mean, jealous-hearted thing!" said Molly, with mock severity.

"Oh, I wasn't speaking for myself, but for the other fellows!" said Sam. "I knew there wasn't any danger of Dick falling in love with such a homely girl as you are."

Smack! Molly's hand struck Sam on the cheek.

"Take that for your impudence!" she cried. "You've

often told me I was the most beautiful girl living, and you know it!"

There was a shout of laughter at this, and for a moment Sam was taken somewhat aback. Then he laughed, too, and said:

"If I ever told you that I must have been temporarily crazy, or thought you were some one else."

The boys returned to their work of drilling, now, and kept at it for another two hours. Most of the older people who had been watching the drilling had gone home, but the girls remained, and when the drilling was finished the boys walked home with them.

Dick had arranged for the youths to meet again early the next morning, and they promised to be on hand. He was very well pleased with the progress made, and said to Sam that he thought they would be able to make the redcoats wish they had stayed away.

CHAPTER V.

LIEUTENANT SHARPLEY AND TRAITOR ARNOLD.

The eight redcoats who had been treated so roughly by the boys when they intruded at the home of Mr. Hardy, rode at as rapid a pace as was possible, and kept it up for hours. Finally, however, they stopped at a farmhouse and put up for the night, and the lieutenant's broken arm was set and the wounds of the other two soldiers were dressed.

Next morning they were away again, however, and about four o'clock in the afternoon they reached the encampment of Arnold, the traitor, who was now in command of a force of British, down in Virginia.

Their entry into the camp, with three of their number wounded and minus their weapons, created considerable excitement, and when they told their story of how they had been disarmed and kicked and cuffed by a crowd of "rebel" boys, the anger of all knew no bounds.

When the lieutenant reported to Arnold, the arch traitor was very angry, and raged like a lion.

"Why, this beats anything I ever heard of!" he cried; "to be beaten and kicked by a band of cubs and robbed of your weapons!—it is disgusting, and we must take some measures to have revenge, Lieutenant Sharpley!"

"That is what I want—revenge!" almost hissed the lieutenant; "and I have come, sir, to ask permission to take a party and return to that neighborhood and punish the young scoundrels as they deserve."

"You have my permission to do so, lieutenant," said Arnold; "but your arm—the wound will prevent you from going, will it not?"

"No!" fiercely. "It isn't dangerous, and I should suffer worse if forced to remain behind than if allowed to go."

"True; doubtless you are right. Well, you may go. How many men will you need?"

"I don't suppose I shall need a score, but to make assurance doubly sure I think I shall take a hundred."

"Very good; a hundred it is. Go, and make a good job of it, lieutenant. Scorch the rebels thoroughly."

"I'll do that!" viciously. "I understand it is a Whig neighborhood, and I will burn the house of every rebel in that part of the country, and kill a few of those young scoundrels to get even for this arm of mine."

"That's the talk! Well, I shall expect a good report when you return."

"You'll hear a good report, too, never fear."

Lieutenant Sharpley went forth from the headquarters of Arnold well pleased. "I'll make those impudent young scoundrels wish they had behaved themselves!" he muttered. "Now, to get my men, and away. I want to get back into the vicinity of the Whig settlement by to-morrow afternoon, and then begin work as soon as it becomes night."

He had no trouble in securing the number of men he wished. Indeed, he could have secured five times that number without difficulty. When this had been finished, and the men had made the necessary arrangements for the journey, they ate supper, and mounting rode away at a gallop.

They rode steadily till midnight, and then went into camp.

They were up and away early next morning, and by four o'clock in the afternoon were within five miles of Mr. Hardy's home.

They were riding along at a good gait, when a youth of about eighteen years leaped forth from the timber at the side of the road and motioned for them to stop.

Lieutenant Sharpley reined up his horse in front of the youth, and eyeing him sternly, said:

"Who are you, sir, and what do you want?"

"My name is Joe Hooker, sir, and I have come to warn you."

The lieutenant looked surprised.

"To warn me?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"Of what?"

"Of danger."

"Of danger—from what source?"

"From the young men of the settlement."

"Oh, from the young men of the settlement, eh?" in a sneering tone. It was evident the lieutenant was not much impressed.

"Yes; they have banded themselves together and are going to fight you. They call themselves 'The Boy Defenders.'"

"Oho! 'The Boy Defenders,' eh? Do you hear that, men? We are to have a fight—ha, ha, ha!" and the lieutenant laughed loudly, the men following suit.

"I don't think you will find it anything to laugh about, sir," ventured Joe Hooker. "There are more than a hundred of the boys, and they are all well armed and will fight. They were drilling in the field close to Mr. Hardy's when I left there two hours ago."

The lieutenant looked surprised.

"Drilling, you say? Why, who is there in the settlement who knows anything about military tactics?"

"Why, there is a young fellow there by the name of Dick Slater. He is from the North, and has a big reputation as a scout, spy and a fighter. He is the captain of a company of youths known as 'The Liberty Boys of '76.' He organized this company of 'Boy Defenders,' and is drilling them."

An exclamation escaped the lips of Lieutenant Sharpley.

"I've heard of the fellow!" he exclaimed.

"So have I," remarked one of his men.

"And I," from still another. "They say he is a regular dare devil, a fiend in battle, and the most successful and famous scout and spy in the rebel army."

"I understand that there is a standing reward of five hundred pounds offered for his capture," said another of the soldiers.

"In that case," said Lieutenant Sharpley, "we must try to capture him and secure the reward. If we can do that, and kill fifty or seventy-five of those boys, and burn down all the homes of the Whigs, we will be doing a good stroke of work."

"It's not going to be such an easy thing, though, lieutenant," remarked one of the men. "If half we have heard about this Dick Slater is true, he will be a hard one to capture, and we may have quite a fight on our hands when we tackle those youths."

"Bah! A pack of boys. Dick Slater himself may be a great fighter, but that won't make warriors of those youngsters; one charge will scatter them to the four winds."

"Don't be too sure of that, sir," said Joe Hooker. "The boys are not cowards, by any means, and they are all good marksmen."

"That's all right, my boy," said the lieutenant, patronizingly. "I am much obliged to you for the information you have brought me. I suppose you live in the settlement."

"Yes, sir."

"All right; hang a white rag out of one of the upstairs windows of your house when you go back home, and we will not burn your house down."

"Oh, thank you, sir."

"That's all right; you may go—but hold! How long has this fellow, Dick Slater, been in the settlement?"

"Since night before last. He was passing along the road and stopped in at the dance at Mr. Hardy's, and then when you said that you would be back with a large force and burn the homes of all the Whigs in the neighborhood, he decided to remain and get up this company and fight you when you came."

"Great guns!" exclaimed the lieutenant. "Was he at the dance the other night?"

"Yes; he is the fellow who shot you in the arm."

A curse escaped the lips of Lieutenant Sharpley.

"So that was Dick Slater, eh?" he exclaimed. "Goo! I'm glad of it! I can get revenge on him by capturing him and secure the five hundred pounds at the same time. Boy, I am indeed much obliged to you for the information."

"That's all right, sir; I'll hang out the white rag when I get home, as you told me to do."

"Do so, and your house shall not be burned."

The boy stepped aside and disappeared in the timber.

"Forward!" shouted Lieutenant Sharpley. "Forward, and we will quickly teach the 'Boy Defenders,' as they call themselves, a lesson that they will not forget in a hurry!"

The party of redcoats dashed on up the road at a gallop.

CHAPTER VI.

"THE BOY DEFENDERS'" FIRST VICTORY.

Meantime, Dick Slater had not been idle. In accordance with his order the boys congregated in the field near Mr. Hardy's at eight o'clock next morning, and they drilled steadily from that time till noon.

All had brought food with them, and they ate their dinner in Mr. Hardy's large front room, Mabel and her mother supplying them with hot coffee.

Soon after dinner Dick sent out a dozen of the boys to do scout work.

"Keep a sharp lookout for the redcoats," he said, "and at the first sign of their approach bring in the news."

The youths said they would, and hastened away, eager to do the first work to which they had been assigned by their famous young commander.

Dick expected to hear some word of the approach of the enemy some time that afternoon, and he was not disappointed.

About half-past four o'clock one of the youths who had been sent out as a scout came galloping in with the news that the redcoats were coming.

"How many of them are there?" asked Dick.

"About a hundred, I should say."

"How far away are they?"

"About a mile and a half."

"We must move quickly, then," said Dick. "There is a splendid place for an ambush down the road about half a mile; we must get there as quickly as possible."

The youths set out on the double-quick, and were soon at the point spoken of by Dick. This was at a bend in the road where it led through a strip of timber.

Dick divided his force into two lines, one being about five feet in front of the other.

"We will not all fire at once," he said; "but the front line will fire first, and then the other line; in that way we will be able to fire double the number of volleys, and will not be so apt to get caught with empty weapons."

The youths thought this was a good idea, and said that they would obey Dick's commands implicitly.

"There is one thing I wish to impress upon your minds," said the youth; "and that is this: Take good aim before you fire; don't fire haphazard; you are all good shots, and ought to be able to hit a man at a distance of twenty yards without any difficulty; take aim as coolly as if you were shooting at a turkey, and then when you fire you will do good execution. Don't hesitate or be squeamish; the men we are waiting for are enemies of our country, and are coming with the avowed intention of burning your homes; don't forget this."

The youths said that they would not forget it.

"We'll take good aim, Dick," they declared, "and we will shoot to kill."

"That is right; you may be sure that if the redcoats get a chance to kill any of us they will do it."

There was no more talk now, for the enemy might put in an appearance at any moment. All remained motionless and awaited the coming of the British.

They did not have long to wait. Not more than five minutes had elapsed when around the bend in the road came the party of redcoats.

They were strung out a distance of a hundred yards or more, and Dick waited till twenty or thirty had passed the point where he was concealed. Then he gave the signal for the youths to take aim.

Instantly up came the muskets to the shoulders of "The Boy Defenders."

Dick waited just long enough for the boys to take aim, and then in a loud voice cried:

"'Boy Defenders,' fire!"

The fifty youths fired almost as one, and the result proved that they had taken good aim before they fired, for at least a score of the redcoats went down, while a number of horses were killed and wounded.

The scene which followed baffles description.

The stroke had come upon the British like a thunder-bolt from a clear sky.

They had not been looking for anything of this kind.

Yells, groans, shrieks and curses went up. The horses kicked, reared and plunged. Lieutenant Sharpley yelled for his men to charge the "rebels," and then all of a sudden came again the sharp command from the roadside:

"'Boy Defenders,' fire!"

The second line of "Boy Defenders" fired a volley. Fifty muskets and rifles belched forth their leaden messengers, with almost as terrible results as had followed the firing of the first volley. It was more than flesh and blood could stand, and with yells of fear the redcoats who had escaped injury, or were only slightly wounded, fled from the spot with all possible speed, Lieutenant Sharpley being among the ones who had escaped.

A cheer went up from the "Boy Defenders," and, leaping out from cover, they fired a volley from their pistols which had the effect of still further accelerating the speed of the redcoats.

The youths congratulated one another on their success in routing the redcoats and then Dick sent a couple of the boys around the bend to keep watch on the enemy and give the alarm in case they should start to return. Then he and his comrades proceeded to learn the full extent of the damage they had inflicted upon the enemy.

They found that they had killed twenty-two outright, and that fourteen were wounded more or less seriously. Dick sent a couple of the boys back to Mr. Hardy's to get spades and a team, and carry the good news of the victory.

The two returned within the hour and the dead redcoats were buried, after which the wounded men were lifted into the wagon.

Dick decided to distribute the wounded soldiers around at the different homes of the patriots, and they were quite willing when he asked some of them about it.

"I think it will be a good plan to have a wounded redcoat in your houses," said Dick; "then, if the British should send a strong enough force here so that we boys could not handle it they would not dare burn your houses for fear of burning their own men."

The patriots said this was well thought of, and one of the wounded men was left at Mr. Hardy's, after which the wagon was started on the rounds, four of the boys accompanying the driver, and a wounded man was left at the home of each of the patriots, as the house was reached.

The news of the wonderful victory of the "Boy Defenders" over the party of redcoats traveled on the wings of the wind, as it were. It was known far and wide very quickly, and a great crowd came to Mr. Hardy's, where the boys had their headquarters, to congratulate them. Dick was praised to the skies for his shrewdness and carefulness in handling the boys, and not letting them be exposed to the fire of the British soldiers.

Joe Hooker, who had taken a roundabout way to get home, after meeting and warning Lieutenant Sharpley, did not learn of the result of the encounter—or, indeed, that any encounter had taken place—until he arrived at his home. Then he was informed of the great victory of the "Boy Defenders," and hardly knew what to think.

"I wouldn't have believed it possible that the boys could have whipped the British!" he exclaimed. "Jove! I can't understand it!"

"That young fellow from the North, Dick Slater, was the cause of it all," said Joe's father, bitterly; "they say he is one of the shrewdest fellows that ever lived, and that he knows more about war and military tactics than nine out of ten of the old generals."

"I guess you're right about that, father," replied Joe; "some of the redcoats said that Dick Slater was so dangerous that the British commander-in-chief has a standing offer of five hundred pounds reward for his capture."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Hooker; "that is quite a sum of money."

There was a peculiar light in the man's eyes and he seemed thoughtful for quite a while and then he called Joe to one side and told him to go over to the home of another Tory, two miles distant, and bring the man of the house, one Dave Bloggs, back with him.

Joe hastened away and in a little more than an hour returned, accompanied by the man in question. Supper was on the table and Bloggs sat down and ate supper with the Hooker family. During the course of the meal Mr. Hooker explained why he had sent for his brother Tory.

"I have a scheme, Dave," he said, "and one which, if carried to a successful conclusion, will be considerable

money in our pockets. How would you like to get hold of two hundred and fifty pounds of British gold?"

The eyes of Dave Bloggs sparkled covetously.

"How would I like it?" he remarked. "I would like it fine, I tell you! But is there any chance of such a thing taking place?"

"Yes; if you have the nerve for a little piece of dangerous work."

"It would have to be pretty dangerous to frighten me off, if there is two hundred and fifty pounds of gold in it," was the grim reply. "But what is your scheme, anyway?"

"I'll tell you: You have heard of this young fellow, Dick Slater, who has been drilling the boys and who led them against the king's soldiers to-day, of course."

"Yes, yes; that was a bad piece of business to-day, Hooker; just to think that those boys killed and wounded thirty-six British soldiers."

"Yes, it is bad, Dave. Well, that fellow, Dick Slater, is, I have learned to-day, worth five hundred pounds to the commander-in-chief of the British army; in other words, he has placed that sum on the youth's head and will pay the amount to any one who will deliver the youth into his hands a prisoner."

"Aha!" exclaimed Bloggs, rubbing his hands; "I think I understand your scheme. It is to capture him and take him to the commander-in-chief and secure the reward."

"That is it, exactly, Dave; and I sent for you to ask if you would go in with me. If you do, and we succeed, it will mean two hundred and fifty pounds for each of us, and that is a lot of money these hard times."

"So it is; and I'll go in with you, Tom. I'm only too glad of the chance; I don't think it will be very difficult to capture him."

"It ought not to be; but how will we go about it?"

"I hardly know; we'll have to be governed by circumstances."

"So we will."

Mr. Hooker's family consisted of himself, wife, son Joe and daughter Daisy, the last-named being a girl of about seventeen years. Having no doubt but that all the members of his family were loyal to the king, Thomas Hooker had had no hesitancy in discussing his plan to capture Dick Slater in their presence. Mrs. Hooker was loyal to the king, and Joe was even a ranker Tory than his father, but pretty Daisy, a quiet girl who seldom had much to say, was, at heart, a patriot.

Among the "Boy Defenders" was a youth named Tom Wilson, and he was Daisy's sweetheart. He was the son of ardent patriot parents and had converted the girl to his way of thinking. Naturally, therefore, although she did

not dare say a word to that effect in the hearing of her parents, she was delighted over the victory of "The Boy Defenders" over the redcoats, and now she was horrified to think that her father was going to become engaged to an attempt to capture Dick Slater, whom she, in common with all the other girls of the settlement, admired greatly. Tom Wilson had praised Dick to the skies and she knew it would be a terrible blow to all the boys should her father and Dave Bloggs succeed in capturing him.

Daisy was sorely troubled and got away from the supper-table as quickly as possible, for fear the others might suspect that something was wrong.

What should she do? she asked herself. Should she remain quietly at home and permit her father and Dave Bloggs to make a success of their plot? Naturally, it was a hard question to answer, for, although he was a Tory, Tom Hooker was a kind husband and father, and the girl feared that if she revealed the plot to Dick Slater and "The Boy Defenders," her father might get into serious trouble.

"I must go and tell them, though," she said, determinedly; "Tom would be very angry if he should learn that I knew of the plot and did not tell of the fact, and that it would be terrible if Dick Slater should be captured, for without him to command them they would not know what to do, and the British would come and burn the home of every patriot in the settlement, after all. Yes, I will go and reveal the plot, even though it gets my father into trouble. Tom will say I did right in doing so and I think so myself; I will go at once."

It was now dark, and leaving the house the girl hastened away in the direction of Mr. Hardy's, where Dick Slater and the "Boy Defenders" had their headquarters.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PATRIOTISM OF DAISY.

Daisy soon reached her destination and sent word to Tom Wilson that she wished to see him. He was in the camp, talking to some of the boys, but came at once as soon as he learned that his sweetheart wished to see him.

"What is it, Daisy?" he asked, after giving the girl a kiss.

"Oh, Tom, I'm in such a lot of trouble!" exclaimed Daisy, throwing her arms around the youth's neck and bursting into tears.

"There, there! little sweetheart; don't cry!" said Tom, soothingly. "Tell me all about it."

The girl then did so, with many stops and much hesitation, and when she had finished the youth gave her a hug and kiss, and cried:

"Daisy, you are the bravest, the best and the sweetest girl that ever lived!"

A little cry of pleasure escaped the girl.

"D-do you really t-think s-so?" she asked, stammeringly.

"Do I think so? I know so, my little darling! Why, just to think that you have come here and told this when your own father is the main person implicated in the plot to capture Dick! Only a heroine would have acted as you have!"

"I'm so glad you think I did right, Tom."

"Oh, there is absolutely no doubt regarding that, Daisy. Of course you did right. But for your having told us of the plot it might have succeeded and that would have meant that we 'Boy Defenders' would have lost our commander, and not knowing anything of the art or strategy of war we should have been no match for the soldiers of King George, and they would have succeeded in burning our homes as they said they would do."

"That would have been dreadful, Tom!"

"So it would, Daisy; but wait here till I go and call Dick. He will know just what to do."

"Oh, Tom, ask Dick if he will be easy on father, won't he? I should feel so bad if any harm should come to him. I think he believes he is doing right—or at least that he is not doing wrong."

"I'll bring Dick here and you ask him yourself, Daisy. I am sure that after you have done what you have he will not be in for harming your father."

Tom hastened away and returned in a few minutes, accompanied by Dick Slater. The youth greeted Daisy pleasantly, and then said, gently:

"Tom has told me why you are here, Daisy. I am very much obliged to you for bringing me the information of the plot to capture me, and I assure you that if I can stop it—and I am sure that I can—no harm shall come to your father as a result."

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" cried Daisy. "I'm so glad!"

"It is I who should thank you, Daisy, and I do thank you." Then he asked: "You know nothing of the details of the plot—how they intended to try to work it to capture me?"

"No; they did not have any plans formulated. They said they would leave the matter to circumstances."

"Then I shall have to be on my guard and keep my eyes open."

"That is what you will have to do," agreed Tom; "and now, Daisy, you had better go back home, as they might miss you and become suspicious. I'll walk over pretty near to the house with you."

"Very well; and now good-by, Mr. Slater; you won't forget—about—father?"

"Indeed I will not, Miss Daisy. Have no fears; your father shall not suffer. Good-by, and thank you!"

Tom and Daisy set out and Dick went to where the boys were encamped and told them that a plot was on foot to capture him.

"I wish to capture Mr. Hooker and his companion," he said, in conclusion. "I am going to give them a good scare, and thoroughly discourage them from making any such attempts in the future. Of course, I would not injure Daisy's father for the world, but it will be no harm to give him a scare."

The youths thought as Dick did with regard to the matter, and told him to tell them what he wished to do.

"I want you to send a dozen of your number to keep watch on the house. I think they will try to decoy me out of the house and away to some place where they will feel safe in leaping upon me and making a prisoner of me."

"Probably they will send Joe to decoy you out of the house and away," suggested Sam Bostwick.

"Quite likely; well, if he comes, I shall go along with him, just as if I suspected nothing, and you boys must follow and then when we get to where the men are you must appear and capture them."

"All right," replied Sam; "we'll be there."

"And bring a good, stout rope, Sam."

"All right."

Dick then returned to the house, feeling very well satisfied with the way things had gone, so far. Some of his scouts had come in just after dark and reported that the party of redcoats had gone into camp at a point five miles to the eastward from Mr. Hardy's, and that, judging from appearances, they had no intention of making another attack. One of the scouts said that a single horseman had ridden away, toward the southeast, and Dick shrewdly guessed that he was a messenger to Arnold, and that he was going after reinforcements. It would be two days at least before the reinforcements could get there, however, and this would give the "Boy Defenders" time to get in shape to repel them when they did come.

Dick was even thinking of taking the offensive and going out and attacking the enemy, and he felt that they would be more than a match for the redcoats. He dismissed this

matter from his mind for the present, however, and going to the house, entered, determined to await the working of the plot to entrap him.

He told Mr. Hardy's folks about it, and they were very indignant.

"The idea of Hooker going into such an affair as that!" said Mr. Hardy, angrily; "he ought to be tarred and feathered and ridden out of the neighborhood on the sharp edge of a rail!"

"It would serve him right," agreed Mrs. Hardy; "but I should be sorry for his wife and Daisy."

"Oh, wasn't it just splendid of Daisy to come and tell you of the plot!" exclaimed Mabel.

"Indeed it was, Mabel," agreed Dick; "she is a noble-hearted girl."

"What will you do to the two rascally Tories when you get hold of them?" inquired Mr. Hardy.

"I don't know, exactly; but I am going to give them a good scare in some way."

"Good! I'm glad you are!" cried Mabel.

An hour passed, and then there came a knock on the front door. Mr. Hardy opened the door and Joe Hooker stood there.

"Good evening; come in, Joe," said Mr. Hardy, though there was not much cordiality in his tones.

"No, thank you, I haven't time," was Joe's reply; "I wish to speak to Mr. Slater."

Mrs. Hardy and Mabel exchanged meaning looks, and Dick got up and went to the door.

"You wish to speak to me?" he asked.

"Yes."

"What is it you wish to say?"

"I wish to speak to you in private."

"Oh, in private, eh?"

"Yes; I have some information for you."

"Why not tell me here? I have no secrets from the folks."

"There are reasons which I cannot give, why I should not do so. If you wish to secure the information—which is valuable, I assure you—you will come along with me."

"Where do you wish me to go?"

"Oh, up the road a little ways."

"Very well," then turning to Mr. Hardy's folks, Dick said: "I will be back soon."

He left the house and went with Joe. Of course, Dick knew he was being decoyed, but he had no fear. A sly glance around showed him the gliding forms of a dozen of the "Boy Defenders."

"They will be on hand," he thought; "now, Messrs.

Hooker and comrade, you are going to get yourselves in trouble!"

Instead of turning up the road, Joe led the way across it and leaped over the fence at the farther side.

"I thought you said you wished me to go up the road with you, Joe?" said Dick.

"I meant across the road. There is a man right over here in the edge of the timber who is waiting for you."

"Who is he?"

"I don't know; he said he had some information for you and sent me after you, that's all I know about it."

"What a cheerful liar you are!" thought Dick, and made up his mind to give Joe a little taste of trouble also.

It was quite dark and Dick could just make out the flitting forms of the dozen "Boy Defenders" who were following them. Joe, being unsuspecting of the fact that they were being followed, never even thought of looking behind him. His mind was on what lay ahead of them.

The timber was only about seventy-five yards distant and they soon reached it. Dick paused and hesitated. He did this for the purpose of seeing what Joe would do.

"Where is the person you spoke of?" he asked.

"He's back in the timber here, a little ways; come along."

Joe strode onward and Dick followed. A glance over his shoulder showed him that his comrades were close at hand, but for that matter Dick would not have been afraid to go with Joe had his friends not been there. His enemies numbered only two men and a boy and he had overcome greater odds than that, many a time.

A dozen steps forward brought the mout into a little opening among the trees. There was a sudden rush of footsteps and two men leaped forward and seized Dick.

"Aha! you are our prisoner, Dick Slater!" cried one.

Then there was another rush of footsteps and Dick's assailants and Joe Hooker, as well, were seized and made prisoners in a twinkling. It was done so quickly that they did not have time to offer resistance.

"Aha! now you are my prisoners!" exclaimed Dick. "How do you like it?"

A hoarse growl was the only reply.

"Who are you, anyway, and why did you attack me?" asked Dick, wishing to carry out the pretence of not knowing who they were so as to shield Daisy.

"That's none of your business!" was the reply.

"Oh, well, you needn't answer if you don't want. We can take you back to the house and see who you are. Ah! that won't be necessary, for, see, the moon is coming out from behind the clouds."

Dick was right. The moon, which until now had been

hidden behind the clouds, suddenly came into view and flooded the little opening in the forest with its mellow light.

The features of the prisoners could be seen quite plainly and the "Boy Defenders" who had been posted by Dick, uttered exclamations of pretended amazement.

"Why, it's Mr. Hooker!"

"And Dave Bloggs!"

"I'm surprised!"

"So am I!"

"What does it mean?"

"I think I know what it means!" said Dick, sternly.

"These men are Tories, are they not?"

"Yes, they are," replied Sam Bostwick; "but I don't see why they should wish to capture you."

"Neither do I," said Dick; "but I'm going to find out why they wished to do it. One of you boys run back to the house and get a rope."

The youths had left the rope at the fence and one of their number hastened to go and get it. He was back in a few minutes, and Dick quickly made a running noose in one end of the rope and placed it around Mr. Hooker's neck. He threw the other end over a convenient limb and three or four of the "Boy Defenders" seized hold of it.

"Now," said Dick, sternly, "tell why you tried to capture me, or up you go!"

Mr. Hooker was badly frightened. So was his son, Joe, who began to beg and plead for his father's life.

"Don't hang him, boys!" he said, in a trembling voice. "Surely you wouldn't do such a thing; it would be murder!"

"Shut up!" cried Dick, with assumed harshness. "It'll be your turn next!" and then Dick turned toward Mr. Hooker.

"Are you going to tell me why you wished to make a prisoner of me?" he asked. "You had better tell and quickly, too, if you don't want to hang!"

Dick was a good actor, and neither of the three prisoners doubted for a moment that he meant what he said.

"I—I'll tell," stammered the Tory; "we w-wished to m-make you a p-prisoner so as to secure the reward offered for y-your capture."

"Oh, that is it, eh?"

"Y-yes."

"How did you know there was a reward offered for my capture?"

"I'll tell!" cried Joe. "If you won't hang father I'll tell everything."

"Go ahead!" said Dick sternly. "I won't promise for

sure, but the probabilities are that if you make a clean breast of it I won't hang your father."

"All right, I'll tell." Then Joe did so, detailing how he had met the British force under Lieutenant Sharpley, that afternoon, and had heard one of the redcoats say that there was a reward of five hundred pounds offered for Dick's capture. "I told father," said Joe, in conclusion, "and then he conceived the plan of capturing you in order to secure the reward."

"And he sent for me and persuaded me to go into it with him," said Dave Bloggs; "I didn't want to, but he finally persuaded me."

"What a liar you are, Dave Bloggs!" said Mr. Hooker, in disgust. "You were glad of the chance to go into it with me, and you know it!"

"Of course he was," said Joe; "you're just trying to get off easy, Dave Bloggs."

"Well, he's not going to get off any easier than you two," said Dick, sternly; "you're all in the same boat."

"But surely you will not hang us!" said Mr. Hooker.

"I will not, on one condition," replied Dick.

"What is the condition?"

"That each one of you take the oath of allegiance to the great cause of Liberty, at the same time renouncing allegiance to the tyrant, King George."

"That's the talk, Dick!" cried Sam Bostwick. "We have the three traitors here at our mercy and we can just as well as not put them out of the way and make sure that they will never again do anything to injure the cause of Liberty. The least that they can do, therefore, is to renounce allegiance to the king and take the oath of allegiance to the cause of Liberty."

"That is the way I look at it," said Dick; "and they have got to do that very thing or we will hang them to this tree!"

Dick spoke in such a grim and determined tone that the prisoners had no doubt that he meant what he said. The result was that it did not take them long to make up their minds.

"We will take the oath," said Mr. Hooker, hastily; "or, at least, Joe and I will."

"So will I!" Dave Bloggs hastened to say. It was evident that he was an arrant coward.

"The next time you go into anything, Mr. Hooker," said Dick, quietly, "you had better choose a braver man for an associate; your friend Bloggs is, I think, about the biggest coward I ever saw."

"You're right about that, Dick," said Sam Bostwick; "and he is just about as big a knave as he is a coward."

"I think he will keep his oath of allegiance just about as long as it takes him to make it."

"If he goes back on it and becomes a Tory again, and I ever get a chance at him, I will kill him with as little compunction as though he were a mad dog!"

Dick's tone was so grim, stern and cold withal, that Dave Bloggs shuddered and hastened to say:

"No, no; I'll be true! I'll keep my swear; I'll never be a Tory again, but will remain a patriot as long as I live!"

"And if you don't remain a patriot, you won't live long!" said Dick.

Then he made each of the three hold up their right hand and repeat the oath of allegiance after him as he said it over.

When this had been done the rope was taken from around Mr. Hooker's neck, the arms of the three were unbound and they were told that they were free to go.

"But remember," said Dick, as the three started away, "a watch will be kept on you, and at the first sign of treachery you will be shot without ceremony. Remember this and beware!"

CHAPTER VIII.

ANOTHER VICTORY FOR "THE BOY DEFENDERS."

The three had just reached the road when they heard some one calling Dick's name. They hastened forward and were met at the gate in front of Mr. Hardy's by one of the boys, who, in excited tones, vouchsafed the information that one of the scouts had come in with the report that the party of redcoats was on the move and was coming toward the settlement.

"So," exclaimed Dick, "they haven't had enough yet, eh? Well, we will do our best to give them enough of it this time. I really think that by the time we get through with them they will wish they had waited till their reinforcements came."

"It will be all the better for us to have them make another attack, won't it, Dick?" asked Sam.

"Yes; for we outnumber them now, and can whip them easily."

"And we'll do it, too," was the cry.

They hastened to the camp, and found the boys wildly excited. They were eager for the fray.

Dick called the scout to him, and asked him where the redcoats were when he saw them.

"They had just broken camp," was the reply, "and were getting ready to start."

At this moment another scout came galloping up, and reported that the redcoats were coming, but were at least three miles away. He had ridden his horse at top speed, while the enemy were coming at a moderate pace.

Dick pondered a few minutes. He was a born strategist, and he was turning over various plans in his mind for getting the better of the redcoats without incurring loss of life in his own force. He was not afraid but that his "Boy Defenders could whip the British, but he did not wish to lose a single life, if he could possibly avoid it. He knew that the parents of the boys had implicit faith in him, and he knew, too, that there were one hundred innocent, loving girls who would suffer terribly if any of the youths were to be killed. He did not wish to cause a single one of the maidens sorrow by having them lose a sweetheart.

So he pondered the situation, and presently evolved a plan which as a stroke of strategy was worthy of going upon the pages of history. His plan was to have his boys mount horses and ride around and get in the rear of the approaching body of redcoats, then they would come forward and overtake the enemy, who, finding horsemen coming from behind them, would think the newcomers friends. When close upon the redcoats, a charge would be made, and by taking them by surprise, it would be an easy matter to rout them.

Dick communicated his plan to the youths, and they thought it a good one. They were eager to put it into execution, and he gave the order to get their horses and mount.

The youths obeyed, and fifteen minutes later they rode away. Dick led the way, as he was now familiar with the country for several miles around, and half an hour later they again struck the main road at a point about two miles from Mr. Hardy's. The youth had sent a couple of the boys down the road, with instructions to keep watch for the approach of the enemy, and to join the "Boy Defenders" at the point where the party reached the main road. The two scouts quickly put in an appearance, and brought information that the redcoats had passed there only a few moments before, and were not more than a third of a mile away up the road.

"We dodged into the timber and hid till they had passed," one explained, "and then hastened on to tell you."

"Good!" exclaimed Dick. "Now we will teach them a lesson they are evidently needing to learn. Follow me, and remember what I have told you."

He rode up the road at a mad gallop, the boys following closely. The moon had gone behind some clouds, and

while it was light enough so that large bodies could be dimly seen at a short distance, it was not light enough so that the color of clothing, or the lack of uniforms could be distinguished.

When half a mile had been traversed, a dark body was seen in front, and presently the "Boy Defenders" were close upon this dark body. At this instant came a hail:

"Hello, there! Who are you?"

"Friends!" called out Dick, in a disguised voice.

"Hurrah! Reinforcements have come!" was the answering cry. "Now we will give those young scoundrels a trouncing they won't forget in a hurry!"

"Yes—maybe you will!" cried Dick, and then in a sharp voice he cried:

"'Boy Defenders,' fire!"

Crash—roar! rang out a hundred musket shots, and wild shrieks and yells went up from the demoralized redcoats. They were completely surprised, and were almost paralyzed. They had not been expecting danger from the rear.

Then in the midst of the confusion, the shouts, yells and curses of the men, and the snorting, rearing and plunging of the horses, sounded the cry of "Charge, 'Boy Defenders!' Charge, and kill the scoundrels who would burn down your homes!"

The youths responded to the command instantly, and dashed forward with the fury of an avalanche. They had been instructed what to do, and dropping the reins on their horses' necks, they clubbed their rifles and muskets, and as they came in among the redcoats laid about them with terrible effect. The clubbed weapons were more effective than swords—though, perhaps, not quite so deadly—and the redcoats were bowled over like tenpins. It took but a few moments for them to get enough. They could not even draw their pistols, and with wild yells those who had not been unhorsed whirled and dashed back up the road as if the Old Nick and all his horde were after them.

"Come back!" cried Dick. "Come back, and take care of your dead and wounded! We are not going to do it for you."

Then he called out to his "Boy Defenders:" "Count heads, and see if anybody has been killed or wounded."

Then he said "One," and the boys counted on up to one hundred. There was not a break, and not a boy had been killed or wounded.

"Good!" he cried. "We have won another fight, and that without the sacrifice of a single life. Come, let's go back home. I don't think the redcoats will attempt to bother us again until after they have received their reinforcements."

The youths rode away up the road at a gallop, and

twenty minutes later were at Mr. Hardy's. They found a crowd of neighbors there, waiting in fear and trembling the return of the boys, and when they learned that the boys had whipped the redcoats, and had not received so much as a scratch in return, their joy knew no bounds. They cheered wildly, and voted Dick Slater the greatest commander and strategist of the war. Three cheers were given for him.

Molly Marsden, Lucy Whitcomb and a score of the girls of the vicinity were there, and they gave their sweethearts such a greeting as was very pleasing to them. Daisy Hooker was there to kiss and smile upon Tom Wilson, and when she had greeted her sweetheart she went and addressed Dick.

"What did you do to father?" she asked, in an aside. "He says he is a patriot now, and he did not object to my coming over here, as he has done before."

"I argued with him," said Dick quietly, "and he had to finally acknowledge that I had the best of it, and he took the oath of allegiance to the patriot cause."

"Oh, I'm so glad you argued with him and convinced him of his error," the girl said; "he will not object to Tom now, and I shall be happy."

"I am glad, too," said Dick smilingly. "In converting him I have added one to the number of patriots and made you happy as well. It was the least I could do, when you did so much for me."

"I guess Dick is a flirt, after all," said Sam Bostwick, with mock seriousness, and shaking his head in pretended sorrow. "See, he is trying to get Tom's girl away from him! I wish I knew the name of that girl up in New York. I'd write to her and tell her how he is carrying on."

"That is all right, Sam," laughed Dick. "You had better be careful, or I may take a notion to try to get your girl away from you."

"If you do, I shall challenge you at once. I am learning to fight very rapidly; and I think I will soon be able to hold my own with you, in spite of your reputation as a fire-eater."

All laughed; they understood Sam and his ways. Then, too, they knew Dick Slater was a noble, true-hearted youth, and that there was no danger that he would try to get any of the boys' girls away from them.

Dick felt so sure that they had heard the last of the redcoats until after the reinforcements should come that he told the boys to go to bed and to sleep.

"If the enemy should try to get at us, the scouts I have out will come in and tell us," he said. "So we may as well take it easy. About day after to-morrow, however,

we will be in for it, for the redcoats will then be down upon us in force, or I miss my guess."

"What will you do then, Dick?" asked Sam, while a number who were near looked at the youth eagerly—the girls and women anxiously as well.

"I hardly know yet, as regards the details," replied Dick. "We will fight them to the last ditch, however. We will not let them have their own way, and come in here and burn our houses down with impunity."

This statement was greeted with a cheer. Evidently these good people thought that Dick Slater was all right. And in this they were right.

"There is one thing that I am hoping for," went on Dick, "and that is that my 'Liberty Boys' may reach here before the reinforcements for the British can do so. If they get here we will put up such a fight as will make the redcoats wish they had stayed away!"

This intelligence—that Dick was expecting his "Liberty Boys"—was very pleasing to all, and especially to the parents of the "Boy Defenders," who were beginning to fear that their sons would soon be butchered by the British. The reputation of the "Liberty Boys" was such that all felt that if they got there in time the redcoats would have hard work making much headway, unless they came in overwhelming force, which was not probable.

The youths escorted their girls to their homes, and then returning went to sleep, rolled up in blankets beside camp fires in Mr. Hardy's timber lot, just back of the stable. Dick, Sam and a few more of the boys slept in the house.

Next morning a scout came in, and reported that the redcoats had returned to their old camping spot, and we encamped there, waiting for the coming of the reinforcements.

"How many did we kill last night, do you think?" asked Dick. "Were you close enough to see whether many were missing or not?"

"I was pretty close, and it looked to me as if there were a good many missing."

Dick nodded. "I shouldn't wonder," he said. "I think we killed and wounded quite a number."

After breakfast Dick selected four of the boys, and sent them away, with instructions to keep a sharp lookout for a party of one hundred horsemen, which would be coming from the north. "When you get eyes on them, head them off, and bring them here," he instructed. "Ask for Bob Estabrook—he is in command in my absence—and tell him that I am here and need them badly."

The youths said they would, and rode away, eager to get sight of the famous "Liberty Boys."

Dick put in the day drilling the "Boy Defenders," and

they showed considerable improvement. "You are doing splendidly," the youth declared. "If I had you for a month you would be able to go through all the maneuvers with the best of the old veterans."

This pleased the boys, and they made up their minds to become soldiers, if such a thing were possible. Many of them were thinking of joining the "Liberty Boys," if Dick would permit them to do so.

Scouts came in at intervals, reporting that the redcoats were remaining quietly in camp, and were not moving abroad at all. "I guess they have had enough of trying to get at us," said one.

This was undoubtedly the case, and there was no danger that they would try another attack until after the reinforcements arrived.

After supper that night Dick and the "Boy Defenders," having loaded a dozen axes and saws into a wagon, made their way to a bridge which crossed a stream at a point about two miles from Mr. Hardy's. As soon as they reached there Dick sent out scouts with instructions to see the advanced scouts and learn whether or not the redcoats were still in their camp. The scouts returned in about an hour with the report that the enemy were in camp, and that everything was quiet.

"Good!" exclaimed Dick. "Now we will get to work."

"What are you going to do, Dick?" asked Sam.

"We are going to cut all the supports of the bridge save two—one on each side, Sam—so that when we wish to do so we can drop the bridge into the water."

"Aha! I understand. That is some more strategy, isn't it?"

"I suppose you might call it that; it will be mighty uncomfortable for the enemy, anyway, if we can make a success of letting the structure down into the water when it is filled with redcoats."

"I guess you are right, old man!"

The idea was a pleasing one to the "Boy Defenders," and they set to work with a will to do the work Dick wished done. He gave orders and bossed the job, and after a couple of hours' work the thing was done. Then they loaded the tools into the wagon, and went back to their camp at Mr. Hardy's, feeling well satisfied.

CHAPTER IX.

BLOGGS IN TROUBLE.

To say that Lieutenant Sharpley was disgusted when his men were routed, the afternoon when they first made

attempt to reach the Whig settlement, is putting it off. He was wild with rage.

He ordered his force to retire to a point five miles from the settlement, and here it went into camp. Many of the men were wounded, and when he took count of those who were missing and found that he had lost thirty-six, he hardly knew what to think.

It was a terrible blow, and the officer could hardly believe, at first, that such a blow had been struck by a "gang of boys," as he had derisively termed them. But he had learned that the boys could strike, and strike hard, right under his nose.

The lieutenant was a stubborn fellow, however. He was the more determined to do what he had set out to do. "I will yet burn the home of every Whig in that settlement, or I will die trying!" he declared, grimly; "and it is more, I will never rest till I have killed a sufficient number of those young scoundrels to give me revenge on the brave boys who went down to-day!"

"We will have to have more men, then, lieutenant," said one of the men; "those boys are demons, and they need Dick Slater to tell them what to do, you know."

"I know; and I am going to send a messenger to Arnold once, asking that three hundred men be sent me. I will crush the life out of Dick Slater and his gang of 'Boy Defenders,' as sure as my name is Sharpley!"

He at once despatched a messenger, who rode away at full gallop. He had instructions to kill his horse, if necessary, but to get to his destination at the earliest possible moment, anyway.

When he comes back with the three hundred men we will ride into the settlement and burn every rebel house and kill every man or boy who looks crosswise at us!" the lieutenant cried.

"What is to hinder us from slipping into the settlement to-night and getting in some of our work?" asked one of the men who had a painful, though not serious wound, and was eager to get revenge on the youths who had defeated it.

The lieutenant thought there was nothing to hinder. "We will try it at any rate," he said; "and if we can deliver a hard blow before the reinforcements get here, much the better. Arnold will not blame me so much for what has already occurred."

Preparations were quietly made for the attempt which was to be made to even up things with the defenders of the settlement.

The soldiers were eager to make the attempt. They were smarting under the defeat almost as much as was the

lieutenant, and it was evident that if they got a chance at the "Boy Defenders" it would go hard with the youths.

As we have seen, they did make the attempt, but were out-generaled by Dick Slater, and routed a second time. The youth's strategy was too much for them.

They returned to their encampment minus a number of their men, after first returning (in accordance with Dick Slater's words to the lieutenant to "come back and look after his dead and wounded") and burying the dead, and carrying the wounded away.

If the lieutenant had been angry before, he was doubly so now. He raged like a wild man and threatened the most terrible things when he should get a chance at those "young scoundrels."

"Those young fellows are dangerous chaps to fool with," said one of the men; "I guess it won't pay us to try to go for them again until after the reinforcements come."

"No; there are too many of them," was the lieutenant's sulky reply; "there must be four or five hundred of them."

Which proves that the lieutenant was bad in mathematics.

Still the redcoats were not to be blamed for thinking they had been outnumbered, for they had been put to flight so easily that they supposed there must be a very large force of the enemy.

The British, now reduced to scarcely more than half the number which had come to the place, remained in camp the rest of that night and next day. Along about three o'clock in the afternoon a prisoner was brought into the camp by a couple of scouts. He was taken before Lieutenant Sharpley, who looked at the fellow sternly and asked:

"What is your name?"

"Bloggs," was the reply.

"Bloggs, eh?"

"Yes; Dave Bloggs."

"Well, Dave Bloggs, what were you doing spying around our camp?"

"I wasn't spying around your camp, sir," Bloggs hastened to say.

"You were not?" the lieutenant's tone indicated that he did not believe the statement of the worthy Bloggs.

"No."

"What were you doing, then?"

"I was coming here to see you."

"Coming here to see me?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"I wanted to help you."

"Help me?"

"Yes."

"In what way?"

"I wanted to act as a guide to you so as to lead you into the settlement by a route they are not guarding, and then you could kill a lot of those 'Boy Defenders' and burn the houses of the Whigs."

"Humph!"

Lieutenant Sharpley eyed the man, searchingly. It was evident that he was suspicious of Bloggs, and was trying to decide whether or not he was telling the truth or lying in an attempt to get out of the hole in which he found himself. The soldiers who had gathered around to hear what the prisoner had to say, looked at one another, doubtfully. They, too, had doubts regarding the truthfulness and sincerity of the worthy Mr. Bloggs.

That individual fidgeted and stood on first one leg and then the other, and was so pale and seemed so ill at ease that there was ample reason why the redcoats should be suspicious and doubtful of him. Finally the lieutenant spoke.

"So that is what you came here for, is it?" he asked. There was a tinge of sarcasm in his tones.

"Yes, sir; that is what I came for, and if you will——"

"But I won't!" interrupted the officer. "It's no use, Mr. Bloggs; your scheme won't work. You won't succeed in leading us into a trap, and for once Dick Slater has over-reached himself."

"What do you mean?" gasped Bloggs, turning paler still.

"Just what I say."

"Y-you d-don't mean that y-you think D-Dick Slater sent m-me here?"

"I do mean that very thing. I think you came here to spy on us with the understanding that if you were captured you should pretend to want to lead us into the settlement, and then lead us into a trap instead. Oh, it won't work, friend Bloggs! And you are in a nice snarl. I rather think that you will be chief performer at a hanging bee, and that before many hours have passed!"

"Oh, say; you are wrong about that, I swear you are!" cried Bloggs. "I'm a loyal king's man, and I hate that fellow, Dick Slater, and it was to get square with him that I came here. Let me explain."

Lieutenant Sharpley hesitated and then said:

"Well, go ahead and be quick about it."

Bloggs obeyed, and told the story of how he and Mr. Hooker and his son Joe had tried to capture Dick Slater, in order to secure the reward and how they themselves had been captured instead, and how they had been forced to take the oath of allegiance to the patriot cause.

"I wanted revenge," concluded Bloggs, "and that's why I am here."

"Don't believe a word of your story," said Sharpley curtly; "take him away, boys, and later on we'll have a hanging bee!"

Bloggs was almost paralyzed with terror and disappointment, but recovered his faculties sufficiently to beg and plead as he was being led away. It did him no good, however, the men merely laughing and jeering at him.

"Oh, you'll hang, all right!" was their comforting assurance; "the lieutenant is in a bad humor on account of the way we have been handled by those 'Boy Defenders' and he is rather glad to get hold of somebody to revenge himself on. I wouldn't give two shillings for your chance of getting away from here alive!"

Just after noon next day a scout came in and reported to the lieutenant that a body of troops was approaching, and the news caused great excitement and joy in the British camp.

"The reinforcements are coming! The reinforcements are coming!" was the cry.

And this was the case. Three-quarters of an hour later the British soldiers, two hundred strong, rode into the camp, and they were greeted with wild cheers.

"Now we'll teach those 'Boy Defenders' a thing or two!" was the cry.

Lieutenant Sharpley would have been better pleased if Arnold had sent three hundred men instead of two hundred, but the messenger explained that two hundred was as many as horses could be found for, and the lieutenant acknowledged that under the circumstances no more could have been sent.

"Oh, well, with two hundred and fifty men we will be able to whip those young scoundrels out of their boots," he said, grimly. "And we will get to work at it at once. Before sundown, this evening, we will have revenged ourselves for the lives of the British soldiers which have been lost, and a score of Whig homes shall be in flames—I swear it!"

But the "Boy Defenders" would have something to say about that.

CHAPTER X.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS" APPEAR.

Dick knew what was going on in the British encampment almost as well as did the redcoats themselves. He had

a lot of scouts and spies, and the youths vied with another in their efforts to learn what the redcoats were doing. They kept Dick well posted by sending word to him every hour or two during both day and night.

Consequently the youth knew when the reinforcements arrived at the British encampment and was informed as to the numbers of the newcomers as well.

"Two hundred and fifty of them, eh?" he said to himself. "Well, that is a good many, but I think we can make so hot for them that they will be glad to give it up and run away. If my brave 'Liberty Boys' would only put in an appearance in time I know we could thrash the redcoats soundly. I hope they will get here."

Dick at once told the boys to get ready for work.

"We are going to meet the enemy," he said, "and we must whip them as we have done twice before!"

The youths cheered wildly at this and said they would do to it that the enemy was whipped.

Dick warned them that it was going to be a more difficult task, this time, than it had been before.

"They have two hundred and fifty men," he said, "while we have only a little more than a hundred."

"But by ambushing them and getting in a number of volleys before they have a chance to fire upon us, we can even matters up with them," said Sam Bostwick. "Isn't that so, Dick?"

"Yes, it will go a good way toward equalizing matters," acknowledged the youth; "but come, let us be going."

The news that the British had received reinforcements and that the "Boy Defenders" were going to go out to meet the enemy, had traveled on the winds and soon a crowd of the nearest neighbors was on hand to encourage the boys and wish them good luck. A number of the girls were present, and they hugged and kissed their sweethearts and gave them all the encouragement that lay in their power. They were as brave as they were sweet, were these girls, and there was not a boy in the company who was not strengthened in his resolve to fight to the last drop, if necessary, in defense of the girls and of their names.

At last the word was given, and the company of "Boy Defenders" marched away, down the road, followed by the cheers of the parents, sisters and sweethearts.

Onward they marched, and half an hour later they reached the bridge across the stream. Dick had caused a couple of axes to be brought along, and he placed them at the end of the bridge where they could be seized instantly when needed. This done, he led the way across the bridge and on up the road.

They had gone not more than a third of a mile when one of the boy scouts leaped out in the road and motioned for them to stop. He hastened up to Dick and reported that the redcoats were coming.

"How far away are they?" asked Dick.

"Not more than half a mile."

"Then we must take to the woods at once," and turning to his comrades he gave the order.

All stepped aside into the timber, and then Dick gave them their instructions.

"We will wait till the front of the column is almost to us," he said, "and then we will fire and retire back up the road, but keeping just within the edge of the timber so they can't see us. When we have retreated a couple of hundred yards we will stop and wait till they come within range, and then we will give them another volley and retire again. We will keep this up till we are within a hundred yards of the bridge, when we will make a sudden dash and get across it. Of course, the redcoats will make a dash to follow, and we will cut the stringers and let a lot of them down into the stream and check their advance—for a while, at any rate."

The youths listened intently, and told Dick they would follow his instructions implicitly.

They waited, eagerly, and presently the redcoats came in sight around a bend in the road. They were on foot. Doubtless they thought they would stand a better chance that way. Dick shrewdly guessed that this was done so that the men could charge into the timber in case they were attacked.

"We will have to move lively after we have fired the volley, boys!" was the word he sent along the line.

Onward came the redcoats, and Dick waited till the head of the column was well within range, and then gave the order to fire.

Instantly the volley rang out and more than a dozen of the enemy went down. It was not like shooting into the ranks sidewise, at close range, and such deadly execution could not be done, but enough had been done to throw the redcoats into confusion and disorder. Yells and curses went up, and then a rush was made toward the spot where the volley had been fired from.

"Give them a volley and then the bayonet!" yelled Lieutenant Sharpley, wild with rage. "Fire!"

The redcoats fired a volley into the timber, but thanks to the promptness with which the "Boy Defenders" had evacuated the spot, not a bullet came anywhere near the youths. They were fifty yards further on, and running like deer.

Into the timber dashed the redcoats, with muskets held

ready to bayonet the enemy the instant they were within reach; but the minions of King George were to be sadly disappointed. There was no enemy there to be bayoneted.

They understood the move of their cunning enemy, however, or thought they did, and rushed back into the road and on up it.

"We'll catch the scoundrels!" cried Lieutenant Sharpley; "after them, men!"

The redcoats gave utterance to wild cheers and dashed forward at top speed—to their death! For suddenly there came a volley from the edge of the timber and down went a dozen or more of the redcoats. This was too much, and with wild yells the soldiers rushed forward, eager to avenge the deaths of their comrades. Again they fired a volley, and again they did no damage—for the enemy had fled with such speed that none of the bullets came anywhere near any of the youths. And, as before, the redcoats found nothing to bayonet save the trees of the forest.

This was maddening, and they rushed out into the road and down it at the top of their speed, Lieutenant Sharpley urging them on, with voice and waving sword. Although he had one arm in a sling, he seemed to be able to get over the ground with the best of them.

Seventy-five yards they ran and then—crash! roar! They were greeted with another volley.

"Ten thousand curses!" roared Sharpley, as soon as he could make himself heard. "Charge, men! Charge the scoundrels, and don't stop till you have pinned every mother's son of them to the ground with your bayonets!"

A wild yell went up from the redcoats and they rushed forward, eager to get at the authors of their trouble. As before, however, when they rushed into the timber, they found nobody there; the enemy had flown.

This was the last stand the youths made on that side of the stream. Dick gave the order to retreat to the stream and dash across the bridge, and the youths obeyed. The redcoats caught sight of them just as they were crossing, and came running at the top of their speed, yelling like fiends.

Dick and Sam seized the axes and began chopping at the two stringers, and soon had them so that a single blow would sever them. Indeed, Dick told Sam to cut his entirely through, knowing that the one on his own side would hold the bridge up till the redcoats got onto it. Sam obeyed, and then reluctantly withdrew into the timber in accordance with Dick's further order. The other youths had already taken refuge there and were reloading their muskets and rifles with all possible despatch.

On came the redcoats, yelling like wild men, and if they had taken note of what Dick and Sam had been doing, they

paid no attention to it, for they did not hesitate a bit to slacken their speed, but rushed onto the bridge at full speed. They were so eager to get at their intended victim that they did not even think to fire upon Dick, who stood there in full view, axe in hand, and faced them, undauntedly.

Lieutenant Sharpley was in the advance, and as the redcoat leader reached the middle of the bridge Dick cut the stringer with a blow from the axe and down into the water went bridge, officer and some of his men.

Shrieks went up from their lips as they struck on the rocks and in the water, and yells of rage and disappointment went up from those who had been on the point of stepping onto the bridge. They raised their muskets to fire at the daring youth who had played such a cute trick on them, but found no one to shoot at—Dick had disappeared within the timber at the side of the road.

To say that the British were angry and disgusted at the turn affairs had taken is putting it mildly. They managed to fish the lieutenant out of the water, and the majority of the men who had fallen in with him succeeded in getting out, but two or three were drowned, through having struck on rocks and being knocked senseless.

The stream was not a very wide or deep one, but was quite an obstruction from a military standpoint, and would be troublesome work getting across it. However, the redcoats were at such a pitch now that they were determined to cross if they had to mingle their own blood with the water and swim through.

Lieutenant Sharpley was nearly insane so great was his rage. To be handled thus by a band of boys was almost too much for him to endure; but he was forced to nurse his wrath and his sore arm and wait till the stream could be crossed.

The redcoats rushed along the bank of the stream, some going up, some down, and presently there came a shout from down stream a ways.

"They've found a place where the stream is fordable!" cried Sharpley. "Hurry, men; we must get across now after those scoundrels before they can get clear away!"

He was to quickly learn that the "scoundrels" were not trying to run away, however. When the soldiers began trying to cross on a tree which had fallen across and made a narrow foot-bridge, they found that they were taking their lives in their hands, for the "Boy Defenders" were on hand and fired with such coolness and precision as to drop every man who started across.

This speedily put a stop to the work of crossing at that point, and, more enraged than ever, the redcoats rushed

down the bank of the stream, looking for a point where they could cross in numbers.

A quarter of a mile farther down they found a place where the water was shallow, there being rapids for quite a ways, and they rushed across like madmen, making the water fly at a great rate. The "Boy Defenders" had moved quickly down the stream on the opposite side, and they fired two volleys right in the faces of the redcoats, dropping a dozen or more in the water, dead or wounded.

The youths then retreated, loading as they went, a feat that took considerable skill, but one which they accomplished successfully.

The redcoats followed as closely as possible, firing a couple of volleys, but did no damage other than to inflict a few flesh wounds. Then ensued a game of strategy, and Dick and his brave boys were much better woodsmen than their enemies, they easily got the better of the contest and succeeded in retreating to the main road and on up it in the direction of the settlement, loading and firing as they went and bringing down a few redcoats almost every time.

The British kept pressing forward, however, and Dick began to fear that he might have to meet them, face to face, in a hand-to-hand combat. This he did not wish to do, as he knew that in such a contest many of the brave boys would inevitably fall, and he did not wish to have to return to the settlement and report that a single one of the youths had lost his life. If he could keep in the timber and not be forced to meet the redcoats in the open, he might be successful in doing this, but otherwise he would fail.

"Oh, if my brave 'Liberty Boys' would only come!" he thought. "Jove! how we would give it to those rascally redcoats! We would make them wish they had stayed back and never come within fifty miles of this place!" As this thought came to him, Dick found they were opposite a road which entered the main road almost at right angles, leading down from the north, and far up this road he saw a body of horsemen. A cry escaped him—a cry of joy.

"They come!" he cried. "The 'Liberty Boys' are coming! Hold out yet a few minutes longer, boys, and the redcoats will be given a surprise such as they are not expecting!"

The "Boy Defenders" were greatly encouraged, and kept up the good work with renewed vim and energy. They knew that when the famous "Liberty Boys" got there the fight would be more evenly balanced. So far as that was concerned they had nothing to complain of. They had killed and wounded seventy-five of the enemy, at least, and not one of the boys had been killed and only two

or three wounded. They were fighting on the defensive, true, but had managed to get much the better of the fight, nevertheless.

They loaded and fired as rapidly as they could, and kept retreating up the road. For a mile or more they had pursued these tactics and had eluded the redcoats so repeatedly and so successfully that the latter were wild with rage and rushed into the timber and out again in great confusion.

Dick gave the order for the boys to retreat rapidly, and draw the redcoats as far up the road as possible, in order that the "Liberty Boys" might come in behind them and give the enemy a surprise from the rear. The youths obeyed and moved up the road as rapidly as possible, keeping just within the edge of the timber so as to be shielded from the bullets of the enemy.

The entire force of redcoats had passed the end of the road leading down from the north, when a body of horsemen dashed out of it and attacked the British from the rear. Right into the midst of the redcoats rode the horsemen, firing right and left with their pistols and yelling and cheering like mad.

"Down with the king! Long live Liberty!" was the cry, and the "Boy Defenders" took up the cry and repeated it, again and again. They poured a galling fire into the front ranks of the British, and the "Liberty Boys" were giving it to the enemy from the rear. Thus caught between two fires the redcoats were thrown into the wildest confusion, and became a mere disorganized mob. It was every fellow for himself, and their one object in life, seemingly, became that of getting into the timber and away as quickly as possible. They had never encountered such fierce fighters as were the "Liberty Boys," and did not know what to do save to try to save their lives by fleeing.

The greater number of those who were not wounded got away, but there were some who were unable to escape and they threw down their arms and surrendered. The battle was over and the arrival of the "Liberty Boys" had quickly turned the scale in favor of the "Boy Defenders."

To say that the "Liberty Boys" were glad to see their young commander is putting it mildly. Some one yelled: "Three cheers for Dick Slater, captain of 'The Liberty Boys of '76'" and the cheers were given with a will.

Then Bob Estabrook leaped down off his horse and shook Dick's hand heartily.

"How are you, old man?" he asked. "And how have you been getting along?"

"I'm all right, Bob," was the reply; "and we are getting along all right, now that you boys have got here. The

redcoats were making it lively for us before you came, however."

"Well, I'm glad we got here in time, then."

The scouts that had been sent out by Dick to head off the "Liberty Boys" and bring them to the assistance of the "Boy Defenders" now reported. They had headed the "Liberty Boys" off, explained what was wanted, and then the party had headed toward the settlement and ridden hard, arriving there just in time, as has been seen.

The four scouts had become well acquainted with the majority of the "Liberty Boys," and now proceeded to make their own comrades acquainted with them. The two parties of youths mingled, and were soon on the best of terms.

Three of the "Liberty Boys" had been wounded, but neither of them seriously. The attack had come so suddenly and unexpectedly to the redcoats that they had not been able to offer any resistance to speak of, and the three "Liberty Boys" who were wounded owed the fact more to accident than aught else.

Dick turned his attention to the prisoners, of whom there were ten. He did not wish to have them on his hands, and so he told them that they might go free; but that he wished them to tell their commander that if he did not at once leave that part of the country it would go hard with him.

"I shall permit him to come back here and bury his dead and take care of his wounded," said Dick; "but when that has been done he must get away from this part of the country at once. Will you tell him?"

The men said they would. They were only too glad to get away, and would have promised anything.

"We have put at least one hundred of your men out of commission to-day," went on Dick, "and that leaves you not to exceed one hundred and fifty. We are more than two hundred, and we know the ground, and you do not. If your commander tries to get at us again we will go in to make a clean sweep of it, and will not rest until we have killed every one of you."

The ten redcoats said they would tell Lieutenant Sharpley what Dick had said, and then took their departure, hastening away in the direction taken by their fleeing comrades.

Dick and his comrades then did what they could to relieve the suffering of the worst wounded redcoats, and after doing this all set out for the settlement. Dick left scouts all along the line, however, as he did not intend to let the British surprise him. He had doubts regarding the matter of the enemy withdrawing. He suspected that Lieutenant Sharpley would not be satisfied to go away

without making one more attempt to get even with the youths who had given his force such a thrashing.

The "Boy Defenders" had been wonderfully fortunate that day. Not a one had been killed, and only four were wounded, and none of these very seriously. This was owing to the fact that they had kept themselves sheltered in the trees the whole of the time, and had shifted their position with such frequency and rapidity that hardly a volley from the British was directed toward the spot where the youths really were at the time. The tactics of the boys had completely fooled the enemy, and rendered their attempts impotent.

When the force reached Mr. Hardy's a large crowd was found there, waiting to learn the result of the encounter with the redcoats. The firing had been heard, and all the non-combatants of the settlement had gathered, and, with a fever of excitement, had waited for the return of the brave "Boy Defenders."

When it was learned that not one had fallen a great outburst of joy and relief went up. The boys' sweethearts leaped into their arms and hugged and kissed them, and caused the boys to forget that they were tired as a result of their exertions in trying to hold the redcoats in check.

Dick Slater was praised by the parents of the boys for bringing the youths all back, and the four who were wounded received so much attention, and were hugged and caressed by their sweethearts to such an extent, that they said they were of a mind to go back and hunt up the redcoats and get wounded some more.

"Oh, but you might get killed next time," said Daisy Hooker, Tom Wilson being one of the wounded ones. "You will just stay right here where you are."

"I'm willing," said Tom, gathering her to him, and giving her a bear-like squeeze. "I'm satisfied to remain here."

"I should think he would be!" growled Bob Estabrook, who, with the rest of the "Liberty Boys," was a silent but interested spectator of it all. "I think I should be in his place."

Presently Molly Marsden approached Dick and said, "Mr. Slater, do you remember what we girls said we would do if you brought the boys all back safe?"

Dick smiled. "I have a pretty good memory, Molly," he said. "Yes, I remember."

"We said we would each and every one of us give you a hug and a kiss, and we are going to keep our word. Come on, girls!" lifting up her voice. "Come on, and keep your word to Mr. Slater. You owe him a hug and a kiss, and you must pay your debts!" Then she leaped forward and gave Dick a hug and a kiss.

A groan went up from several of the "Liberty Boys."

Bob, who was standing near, said: "Oh, what luck! Dick always was the luckiest fellow alive."

As the girls came running up, laughing and replying to the teasing remarks of their sweethearts, who pretended to be jealous, Dick lifted his hand, and said:

"One moment, young ladies. You must know and understand it would be happiness, indeed, for me to be hugged and kissed by you, but I do not feel that it is fair, under the circumstances. You see these young fellows here?"

Indicating the "Liberty Boys" by a wave of the hand. Well, they have been my comrades, night and day, in fair weather and foul, in peace and in battle, for nearly five years; we are like brothers, and there is not one among us who would not cheerfully give up his life in defense of any one of the others. In their behalf, as their comrade and brother, I am going to ask you brave, true-hearted girls to give them the kisses you intended to give to me. They are true-hearted and manly, have sweethearts at home, and will receive the kisses in the spirit in which they are tendered. And they have really earned them, too, more than I have, for if they had not put in an appearance to-day when they did the redcoats might have succeeded in killing a number of the boys of the settlement. The coming of the 'Liberty Boys' turned the tide, and the British were routed. Now, I leave it to you girls to say. Don't you think they are entitled to the kisses?"

"Yes, yes!" the girls cried, and without a word they gazed out the "Liberty Boys," and gave them the kisses that had been intended for Dick Slater.

"Oh, Dick, you are a man and a brother!" murmured Bob Estabrook, who had received a kiss from pretty Lucy Whitcomb. "It is all right, old man; and I'll never whisper a word to Sis about how you were kissed by the sweet Virginia girls!"

Molly heard what Bob said, and running to him, she seized him by the arm, and asked eagerly:

"Oh, is your sister Mr. Slater's sweetheart?"

"Yes," replied Bob, "I guess I shall have to be his brother-in-law one of these days, whether I like it or not. She is a regular fire-eater, though, and if I were to tell her how you girls have been kissing Dick, I expect she would give him a piece of her mind."

"I don't believe she would," cried Molly. "I know better, and I wish I could see her and tell her how we admire our sweetheart. He has saved our sweethearts for us, and saved our homes from being burned, and if she should get mad because we kissed him I shouldn't like her a bit—and I don't think any girl Mr. Slater would love could do such a thing."

"You are right, Molly," smiled Dick. "Alice would not

be angry, but would be proud to know that I had been so honored, and she would love you girls like sisters if she knew you."

"I knew it!" cried Molly. "And I love Alice Estabrook, even though I have never seen her."

"And how about her brother Bob?" asked that youth, with a grin.

"Hello! Some one else will have to be careful!" laughed Dick. "Supposing I were to tell sister Edith how you are carrying on, Bob?"

"Oh, is your sister his sweetheart?" cried Molly eagerly. And then, when Dick acknowledged that such was the case, the jolly girl gave a scream of delight, and rushed away to tell everybody how Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook had each other's sister for a sweetheart. She thought it was quite a romance, and so did the majority of the girls, and it furnished them the theme for considerable talk for many a day afterward.

The "Liberty Boys" were given a hearty welcome by the men and women of the settlement, for they realized that these bronzed and youthful veterans had been the means of their getting back their sons alive, when otherwise many of them might never have returned.

The youths went into camp along with the "Boy Defenders," and they were soon as well acquainted as though they had been campaigning together for a year.

Dick told them to rest up and take it easy, as he felt certain there would be work for them to do that night; he believed the British would make at least one more attempt to strike the defenders of the settlement a blow.

In this he was right, for about ten o'clock that night a scout came in, and reported that the British were moving in a roundabout way, evidently with the intention of trying to enter the settlement from the opposite direction from the way they had tried to enter it before.

"Get ready, boys!" cried Dick. "We will give them one more good thrashing, and I think that will end it."

CHAPTER XI.

CELEBRATING THE VICTORY.

The youths were eager for the fray.

They had had such good luck so far that they felt that they could easily dispose of the enemy.

Then, too, the "Liberty Boys" were with them, and they felt that they were utterly invincible.

Dick left several youths behind, as messengers, whose

duty it would be to bring the reports to him that were brought in by the scouts.

Dick led his force away in a southwesterly direction, and moved leisurely, as he knew that they had plenty of time. From time to time he received reports of the progress of the British, and at last he found himself almost in front of them. There was heavy timber at this point, and it would make a splendid place for an ambush, so Dick decided to secrete his men here and await the coming of the enemy.

He arranged the youths in the best possible position for doing good execution, and then gave all such instructions as he thought necessary.

Twenty minutes later the redcoats came in sight. The moon was shining brightly, and it was easy to see such a large body at quite a distance. Dick sent the word down the line for the boys to make ready, and the clicking of the locks was heard.

On came the redcoats. They were unsuspecting, and thought that they were going to catch the defenders of the settlement napping by coming into it from a different direction from the one that would be watched. They little knew they were marching to their death, but they were soon to learn that such was the case.

Dick waited till about half the force had got past, and then he gave the word for a volley to be fired. He had divided the two hundred youths up into four sections, and one section was to fire at a time. In this way they would be able to fire four volleys before all the loads were gone from their muskets and rifles, after which they could fall back on the pistols, and as each youth had at least two of the small firearms, that would make eight more volleys which would be at their command before it would be necessary to reload a weapon—and Dick did not believe the redcoats would make it necessary for them to have to do any reloading.

In this he was right. The attack came as a clap of thunder from a clear sky. The British were not expecting anything of the kind, and were taken wholly by surprise.

They tried to rally and return the fire, but as volley after volley was poured into their ranks they became completely demoralized and finally turned and fled at the top of their speed. The majority threw away their weapons and many yelled in fright as they ran. They had never been so terribly handled in all the time they had been in America, and they had been engaged in a number of desperate battles, too.

A number threw down their muskets and surrendered, begging for quarter. They were made prisoners, and when it was all over it was found that at least seventy-five had

been killed and wounded. Not a single one of the youths had been killed, though several were wounded—and this is not so strange when it is taken into consideration that the redcoats were taken by surprise and were treated volley after volley in such rapid succession as to completely demoralize them. They had become so rattled that they did not know what to do, and the few shots that were fired in return were fired almost without the knowledge of the men who did the shooting, the training of the soldiers having prompted it, and the performance having become practically mechanical.

Among those captured was Lieutenant Sharpley, and he was so thoroughly disgusted and disheartened that he said to Dick:

"Shoot me and have done with it! I am ashamed to go back and report that I have been whipped by a gang of boys, and have no desire to live. Shoot me!"

"Oh, no; I won't do that," said Dick. "The fortunes of war have gone against you, lieutenant, that is all."

"I am disgraced forever, and all chance for advancement is gone. I have no desire to live!"

"Oh, I think you will change your mind about that," said Dick. "I certainly shall not shoot you; on the contrary, I am going to let you go free, and your men as well. We have no use for prisoners."

Lieutenant Sharpley still protested that he had no desire to live, but all noticed that he brightened up considerably when he learned that he was not to be held a prisoner.

Dick told the lieutenant that he and his men might remain on the ground and recall their comrades and bury their dead and take care of their wounded.

"As for us, we will return to the settlement," he said in conclusion. "I shall keep scouts out, however, and you make another move toward attacking the people of the settlement I shall go to work and finish you if I am good and all. I will shoot your men without mercy and will give no quarter. You are free to depart, and you will do well to do so at once; and when you get back to Arnold tell him that 'The Liberty Boys of '76' are coming for him with a rope woven especially to hang aristocrats and traitors such as he!"

The lieutenant made no reply, but it was plain that he had had all he wanted.

It was the general belief among the "Liberty Boys" and "Boy Defenders" that the redcoats would give up the attempt to burn the homes of the Whigs of the settlement and return to the main force under Arnold, and it turned out that they were right. Next morning, just after breakfast, a scout brought in the word that the remnant

the British force had broken camp and was riding away in the direction from which they had come.

"The danger is past," said Dick, quietly; "now you patriots may breathe freely once more, and unless I miss my guess you will not be bothered soon again, for I think Arnold will have enough to do to look out for himself from now on."

The people of the settlement were delighted. They had gathered at Mr. Hardy's that morning to see the youths and hear the story of the fight with the redcoats, and they could not say enough in praise of Dick Slater. They declared that he was a great strategist, second only to the great Washington himself.

The girls were out in full force, of course, and a happier set of girls never lived. They were proud of the boys and were honest enough to let them know it. The result was that everybody was happy—so much so, in fact, that when Sam Bostwick suggested that they give a dance that night in honor of their victory over the redcoats he was almost mobbed by the delighted maidens who, headed by Molly Marsden, pulled and hauled and slapped the poor fellow around to such an extent that an onlooker who did not understand the matter would have thought they were trying to tear him to pieces instead of simply trying, in their impulsive, enthusiastic way, to show their approval of his suggestion.

The dance was held that night. All the girls of the settlement, more than a hundred in number, were present, and the dancing was kept up all night. There were three large rooms downstairs at Mr. Hardy's, and the furniture was taken out and dancing went on in all three rooms at once. From forty to fifty couples were dancing at the same time, and the only let up was for an hour, from twelve to one, when the dancers stopped long enough to partake of a bountiful supper which was served in the big kitchen.

Dick was the hero of the occasion, and as every girl present wished to dance with him, he was kept pretty busy.

"I am working harder than I ever worked in my life," he said to Mr. Hardy; "but I'm having a fine time, nevertheless, and I guess, to judge from appearances, that all are enjoying themselves."

"It would certainly seem so," agreed Mr. Hardy. "Well, you have earned your enjoyment."

Of all present perhaps none enjoyed themselves so much as did the "Liberty Boys." They, as Bob expressed it afterward, "almost danced their legs off." They danced with the same vim and energy that they usually displayed when going after the redcoats, and for once in their lives the

girls of the settlement had their love of dancing gratified to the fullest extent.

When the dance broke up in the early morning all who lived at a distance bade Dick and his "Liberty Boys" good-by, as the youths had announced that they would take their departure from the settlement at noon.

After a few hours' sleep and a hearty meal, which was at once breakfast and dinner, Dick and his "Liberty Boys" got ready to take their departure. It really gave Dick considerable pain to have to part from Sam Bostwick, Tom Wilson and all the other young fellows who had constituted the company of "Boy Defenders," and he noted that there was a very sober look on the faces of Molly Marsden, Lucy Whitcomb, Mabel Hooker and the other girls who were present.

"May your life be preserved and you be safely returned to the arms of your sweetheart, Alice, when this cruel war is over!" breathed Molly Marsden as she shook hands with Dick.

"Thank you, Molly," replied Dick, gently; "please accept my best wishes for your happiness—and Sam's!"

Five minutes later the "Liberty Boys" rode away from the Whig settlement, followed, as far as they could hear the voices, by cheers from the lips of the "Boy Defenders," their sweethearts and parents.

Five miles east of Mr. Hardy's the youths saw a human form swinging at the end of a rope tied to the limb of a tree by the roadside. Dick spurred his horse up near enough so that he could see the face of the corpse.

"Dave Bloggs!" he exclaimed. "He did not keep his oath, after all; and in endeavoring to get revenge on me he undoubtedly ventured into the camp of the redcoats, was taken for a patriot spy and hanged. His fate was deserved."

Then the "Liberty Boys" rode onward.

THE END.

The next number (56) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' WARM WORK; OR, SHOWING THE REDCOATS HOW TO FIGHT," by Harry Moore.

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